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Trauma as [a Narrative of] the Sublime:

the Semiotics of Silence

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Trauma as [a Narrative of] the Sublime:

the Semiotics of Silence

by

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Lovingly dedicated to my sister, Winnie the Boo; Astrid Nadolny; my grandfather, Clement (Chan) Chandler, and Nichola Torbett

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Both traditional and contemporary approaches to psychic trauma begin with the basic assumption that trauma is a pathological disordering of the subject in response to "an event outside the range of human experience." Such event-based approaches to trauma have failed to establish a unified understanding of the wide range of symptoms and experiences that accompany traumatic crisis. This study departs from these traditional assumptions, placing the range of existent discourse from fields such as psychology, ethics, social theory, cognitive science, and literary studies within the broader framework of semiotics and epistemology.

This broader framework allows me to define the underlying problematic in trauma as the *finitude* of what can be expressed *and* understood by others, and the *infinitude* of

human experience not bound by the structure of symbolic meaning. Beginning with this basic opposition, I develop a *dynamic* model of semiosis and subjectivity, in which the contrasting cognitive objectives of delimiting and expanding meaning can be understood as a productive *differential* that induces a *current* of experience, cognition, discourse, and identity. This dynamic model utilizes the anomalous symptoms and responses of traumatic crisis to expand existing models of subjectivity, since I argue that what we call "trauma" is actually an attenuation of sub-processes integral to the successful functioning of signification.

The dynamic model of signification and subjectivity defined in this study provides a comprehensive explanation for what has seemed a widely scattered and unpredictable array of traumatic symptoms, situating physical, ethical, emotional and social "conflicts" within a single contiguous process. More importantly, it makes it feasible to talk about fields of study as disparate as psychology, cognitive science, social science using parallel models that are based upon the same principles. This will allow one field to contribute to another in a way that has not yet been possible, and has implications for the active treatment of traumatic crisis. Finally, the model developed here founds an overarching interpretive approach to trauma narrative that is textually based, and hence applicable to literatures from a different cultural and historical basis.

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Introduction

> And the Lord came down to see the city and the tower, which the children of men builded. And the Lord said, Behold, the people is one, and they have all one language; and this they begin to do: and now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do. Go to, let us go down, and there confound their language, that they may not understand one another's speech. (King James Bible, Genesis 11.5-7)

In the twentieth century, psychological trauma has emerged as a dominant discourse both in popular culture and in scholarly debate. First understood in mid-nineteenth-century medicine and experimental psychology as a physiological response to a physical trauma,[1] the notion of psychic trauma has changed over the course of the last century and a half, transcending the field of medicine, and challenging basic assumptions about ethics, cognition, individual identity, and social identity. In the most general terms, psychic trauma constitutes a response to an event or experience that overwhelms the individual's coping mechanisms. The traumatic response is characterized by a wide range of often paradoxical symptoms, some of which are somatic in nature, others of which are manifested as a disruption to cognition, identity, and even to the individual's ability to formulate a narrative of the trauma.[2] (For a more detailed examination of traumatic crisis and the symptoms that such crisis may engender, see section 1.0.2.)

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[1] Trauma has been variously defined. A standard overview of the origin of modern psychology can be found in: Henri F. Ellenberger, *The Discovery of the Unconscious: the History and Evolution of Dynamic Psychiatry* (New York: Basic Books, 1970). George Drinka's *The Birth of Neurosis* is a standard work that examines hysteria, and more specifically, the social conditions out of which the diagnosis of hysteria emerged. George Frederick Drinka, *The Birth of Neurosis: Myth, Malady, and the Victorians* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1984). For a look at traditional psychiatric treatment of hysteria from a feminist perspective, see Elaine Showalter, *The Female Malady: Women, Madness, And English Culture, 1830-1980* (New York: Pantheon, 1985).

[2] Those symptoms are summarized in Judith Herman's *Trauma and Recovery*, and include paradoxical alternations such as a sense either of total victimization, or of total culpability; contradictory manifestations of emotional flooding (hyperarousal) and emotional constriction; explosive or inhibited expressions of

While my initial interest in the subject of trauma was personal, largely driven by curiosity about the nature of my own traumatic experiences, that interest has been sustained by an abiding curiosity concerning the apparent fragmentation of the topic. Struck by the sheer inadequacy of available definitions for psychic trauma, I found it particularly remarkable how often trauma theorists fall back on teleological arguments, defining and delimiting traumatic crisis by an event presumed to have produced that crisis, while at the same time precluding that "event" from the scope of their inquiry. Equally puzzling is the tendency to reduce and fragment the topic of trauma such that repression precludes dissociation, the ethical treatment of trauma precludes the epistemological, and physiological explanations preclude psychological ones.[3] Researchers are divided as to whether trauma is chiefly an epistemological crisis or an

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anger; and hypermnesia and amnesia. Judith L. Herman, *Trauma and Recovery*, rev. ed. (New York: Basic Books, 1997) 121.

[3] This former stance that trauma has a physiological basis has been perhaps most fully developed in the work of Bessel van der Kolk and his colleagues, and rests on a lineage that goes back to Pierre Janet and Freud (in his earliest work) and even earlier research. Bessel A. Van der Kolk, ed., *Psychological Trauma.* Washington, DC: American Psychiatric Press, 1987). Some theorists are skeptical of this approach, perhaps most vociferously, Ruth Leys, whose 2000 book, *Trauma: A Genealogy* examines the history of trauma and its psychiatric treatment as having evolved along a dichotomous path of *mimesis* and *antimimesis*. Ruth Leys, *Trauma: A Genealogy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000) 8-9. Leys explicitly rejects van der Kolk's view that "traumatic" memory is held apart from ordinary "narrative" memory. In particular, she rejects what she sees as van der Kolk's claim that traumatic memory is held in an *unaltered form*: "[…] because the victim is unable to process the traumatic experience in a normal way, the event leaves a 'reality imprint' in the brain that, in its insistent literality, testifies to the existence of a pristine and timeless historical truth undistorted or uncontaminated by subjective meaning, personal cognitive schemes, psychosocial factors, or unconscious symbolic elaboration" (7). She is equally critical of Cathy Caruth, a literary critic whom Leys accuses of eliding the veridical with the literal, like van der Kolk, and of leaning too heavily on epistemological-ontological claims (229). See Cathy Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996). Leys also criticizes van der Kolk for offering what she characterizes as: "a causal analysis of trauma as fundamentally external to the subject that is not only poorly formulated but is haunted by the same problem of mimetic suggestibility that the theory is designed to forestall (16). I agree that van der Kolk does not overcome the inadequacy of current definitions of trauma, which tend to focus on the external event as the origin of the traumatic response. While I agree with Leys contention that traumatic memory cannot be understood as an absolutely literal and unaltered memory of an event (242), I disagree with her categorical rejection of the notion that traumatic memory might be held in a manner that differs neurobiologically from symbolized, narrative memory.

ethical crisis, whether it is the trauma/victim or society that can more authentically speak as to the true nature of a given trauma, and whether unmediated testimony or literary representation is better suited as a medium of expression for traumatic experience. There is similar disagreement as to whether the survivor and the witness can share knowledge of trauma, or even share an experience of such.[4]

Although there is some merit in many of these seemingly contradictory theoretical stances such as Freud's model of repression and Janet's model of dissociation, none provides an explanation for traumatic crisis that is wholly adequate. This has led me to question the presumption that one theoretical stance must preclude the other. The mutually preclusive nature of various theoretical stances within the study of trauma is predicated upon certain assumptions about meaning, identity, and subjectivity. Those assumptions tend to be reductive, conceiving of subjectivity as monolithic, claiming that "truth" can be shared by the individual and the society to which s/he belongs, or that there is one true narrative to be produced in describing traumatic experience.

Rather than attempting to force our understanding of psychic trauma into existing notions of meaning, identity, and cognition – (an effort that has yielded a plethora of inconsistencies and paradoxes) – it would seem to be more sensible to examine how trauma might inform our understanding of both subjectivity and of the way in which meaning comes into being. The theoretical approach to trauma that I develop in this study attempts to do just that – to allow trauma to expand existent theories as to how subjectivity and meaning come into being. When we are presented with a paradox such as

[4] A closer examination of these various disagreements is presented below.

the seemingly paradoxical nature of the traumatic response, then common sense should tell us that our own assumptions and structural conceptualizations are falsely limited – assumptions that are so foundational that they escape the framework of our inquiry, and that therefore perplex us rather than prompting us to modify those assumptions. Trauma is not an anomalous or paradoxical condition. Rather, it presents us with the unique opportunity to understand dimensions of subjectivity and cognition that otherwise remain beneath the threshold of conscious, human awareness. In this sense, what I present here is as much a theory of subjectivity and of cognitive functioning as it is a theory of trauma.

This study is the product of an abiding intellectual interest in the formation of meaning both at an individual, cognitive level, and at the social level, where our personal apprehension of meaning is either ratified or rejected. Throughout my academic career, I have been occupied with various theoretical approaches to the formation of meaning and of our apprehension of reality, beginning with a series of courses taken at the University of Hamburg in cognitive science and aphasia. Over time, this interest in the genesis of meaning and, more importantly, the failure of symbolized meaning to express certain experiences, led me to examine the way in which that subject is treated in philology, linguistics, philosophy, psychology, and finally, semiotics. In examining the role of language and symbolized meaning in human cognition, I was led to conclude that one of the most critical difficulties underlying traumatic crisis is the breadth of potential human experience, and the finitude of what may be expressed in any existent field of symbolized meaning.

In signifying experience, the individual is forced to fulfill what are often competing agendas. On the one hand, she is driven to signify unmediated somatosensory experience, and whenever such experience is novel, and therefore heterogeneous to symbolized meaning, these efforts lead *per force* to the alteration of existing meaning schemes and to the expansion of what can be expressed.[5] At the same time, the individual must also fulfill the essential objective of preserving symbolized meaning that is shared by others in her social environment. The individual's apprehension of meaning that is formed by her own unmediated experience must, in other words, remain *mutually comprehensible* in that social domain. In this way, she is not free to symbolize experience at will and without the constraint of what others may have experienced.

In examining trauma via both primary and secondary sources, it became apparent that the inability to "speak" of trauma – that is, to fully signify traumatic experience – is derived not from the inability to find or create words to express that experience. Rather, it comes from the difficulty facing the traumatized individual who must challenge not only her own apprehension of meaning and identity, but who must challenge the social apprehension of these as well, overcoming social opposition to such change by those who do not share that same sensory experience, in order that she might find an adequate listener. If one stops to consider that meaning comes into being in the intersection of opposing forces – the reductive schemata of socially accepted, symbolized meaning

[5] Throughout this study, I will use the pronouns "she" and "her" when referring to an indeterminate subject such as "the traumatized individual." I do so in order to avoid awkward constructions such as "s/he" and to avoid the grammatically awkward "their" for the singular possessive adjective, which pains my inner grammarian, despite whatever degree of acceptability such usage may have achieved in scholarship. This decision to use the feminine pronoun is in no way intended as a political statement as to the gender of the trauma survivor, etc. Rather, I have chosen to use the feminine pronouns simply for clarity's sake, and because I, myself, am a woman.

versus the call for its modification by heterogeneous, somatosensory experience – it becomes possible to identify two simultaneously occurring but mutually opposed traumatic processes; one individual, and the other social. The individual, in other words, is bound to signify her own unmediated sensory experience and yet, at the same time, must preserve the linguistic bond that she shares with the discursive community.

There is not a single "true" or "more authentic" trauma narrative – a notion that has divided researchers among those who posit that the survivor alone can speak, and those who posit that the witness of trauma testimony and society must formulate that narrative. [6] Certainly the survivor is the only individual who can know and represent her own unmediated experiences, and any attempt to speak for the survivor or to interpret her traumatic crisis is an imposition of another individual's own apprehension of that experience upon her. When that survivor brings a trauma testimony or narrative to the domain of social discourse, however, the heterogeneous nature of that narrative challenges the limits of shared symbolized meaning. As such, the witness or listener of

[6] Kalí Tal strongly criticizes the tendency of recent trauma theorists (particularly Felman and Laub) to appropriate the survivor's testimony, placing the locus of authentic interpretation with the witness of the testimony. Kalí Tal, *Worlds of Hurt: Reading the Literatures of Trauma* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996) 53. As Tal observes concerning Felman and Laub's *Testimony:Crises of Witnessing*: "[…] the survivor's experience has been completely replaced by the experience of those who come in contact with the survivor's testimony – an appropriative gambit of stunning proportions. We are treated to a new traumatic phenomenon: 'the crisis of witnessing'" (53-54). Shoshana Felman, and Dori Laub, *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History* (New York: Routledge, 1991). I agree with Tal in her criticism of Laub and Felman's claim that the witnesses are traumatized when they "encounter the real" through listening to the survivor's testimony (53), as though the traumatized individual and the witness shared the same "true" experience. I object, however, to her dismissal of any "crisis of witnessing" (54). Certainly it would be incorrect and even unethical for the witness of a testimony to interpret the experience of trauma for the traumatized individual, or to claim that she can know that experience. I will argue, however, that the narrative of traumatic experience can indeed produce a crisis of witnessing insofar as that narrative brings heterogeneous content to social discourse, and as a result, forces the witness of that discourse to confront the dissolution of the linguistic bond shared with the traumatized individual. The crisis that may emerge would reflect the instability of meaning brought about by an encounter with an assertion of heterogeneous discourse, and would be unique to each witness, although that crisis could not be said to be of equal intensity as that of the immediate victim.

trauma testimony is forced to come to terms with what is heterogeneous in the narrative. The witness and the survivor cannot share the same traumatic experience any more than they can share *any* unmediated somatosensory experience. What they share is the challenge of renegotiating symbolized meaning and of restoring the linguistic bond between them in the wake of evidence that such meaning does not objectively reflect a shared, external reality. They share, in other words, the lacuna of silence that follows the devaluation of symbolized meaning and language.[7]

As I have suggested, the difficulty that researchers have faced when examining trauma is the reductive and fragmenting nature of what are generally held assumptions about subjectivity, meaning, and identity. In particular, *static* models of subjectivity urge one to resolve what is viewed as conflicted identity to a single subject-entity. Similarly, conflicted meaning (both as it is apprehended and expressed by the traumatized individual) is expected to resolve to a single locus of symbolized meaning that, in modern philosophical terms, is held in a social domain (i.e., Lacan's *symbolic order*, Kuhn's *paradigm*, and Foucault's *episteme*).[8] Confronted with the demand to maintain these

[7] Leys has criticized Caruth, and Felman and Laub for supporting this notion that both the survivor and the witness of the testimony share the rupture in meaning and that it should be imperative that this lacuna, or incomprehensibility be preserved as the truth in traumatic testimony. Leys writes: "But for Caruth such an act of narration risks betraying the truth of the trauma defined as an incomprehensible event that defies all representation. Accordingly, she calls for a mode of responding to trauma that ensures the transmission of the break or gap in meaning that constitutes history as inherently traumatic" (269). I do not wholly agree with Leys' rejection of Caruth's claims. Indeed, although specific criticisms seem to be well-founded (in particular her criticism of Caruth's claim in *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*, along with van der Kolk, that traumatic memory is held *unmodified* outside of ordinary, narrative memory), much of Leys criticisms, especially of Caruth and van der Kolk, appear to be more personally motivated than based upon scholarly disagreement. Cathy Caruth, ed., *Trauma: Explorations in Memory* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995).

[8] See Jacques Lacan, *Écrits: A Selection*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Norton, 1977) 125; Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (New York: Vintage Books, 1970) 191; and Thomas Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970) 38-39. I disagree with the assumption contained in these theoretical positions that meaning is

monolithic concepts of subjectivity and symbolized meaning, it is natural that researchers should have difficulty agreeing on a definition and understanding of trauma. Its ability to disrupt somatic functioning, identity, cognition, discourse, and social interaction, as well as unpredictability as to whether or not traumatic crisis will emerge in response to a given experience or as to which symptoms will appear, falls well outside of the framework of what may be explained using static notions of subjectivity and symbolized meaning.

What is ultimately needed is a *dynamic model* of subjectivity, cognitive functioning and semiotic activity, not simply in order to understand trauma, but in order to understand the tension that exists between individual cognition and socially sanctioned meaning. We know that we are not born with a fully formed, cognitive apprehension of symbolized meaning and identity, but must somehow arrive at these from what is the first instance of our experience of the world – our own unmediated, sensory experiences. These sensory impulses, which arise within the body and via our sensory receptors and afferent nerves, comprise nothing more than an experience of our own bodies, and yet from these, we must somehow fulfill a range of dramatically diverse objectives, including the formation of bodily awareness, the separation of what is experienced (the object) from the experiencer (the subject), the development of a symbolized apprehension of reality and the capacity to communicate socially, the formation of individual identity within social interaction, the construction of a shared social identity (i.e., an identity that

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actually held in the social domain. Rather, I argue that meaning can only be held individually, at the level of Idiolect – the individual's personal apprehension of symbolized meaning – since there is no single cognition that apprehends "shared meaning." I will argue that shared meaning exists by a concensus, in which each member of a discursive community possesses their own cognitive apprehension of meaning and idenity, but agrees (not necessarily consciously) to behave as though meaning were shared in the interest of successful communication and social interaction.

collectively characterizes a specific discursive community) and the formulation of a shared, social ethics.

All of these objectives must be fulfilled using the same somatosensory input held by the individual, as well as from the interaction of individuals, each driven by their own unique sensory experiences. At a neurocognitive level, sensory experiences must be organized and reorganized using different logical terms, and although we cannot yet examine these aspects of cognitive functioning at a physical level using available research methods and technologies, existent theories already outline potential organizational differences (i.e., Lacan, Kristeva, Ricoeur, etc.). The model of cognition and subjectivity presented in this study attempts to explain this variegated functioning by creating what is essentially a metaphor for the functioning of cognition, subjectivity, and semiotic activity. In devising this model, I attempt to systematically account for the various ways in which sensory experience would have to be organized in order to fulfill the objectives listed above. These efforts yielded a set of five *organizational domains* that progress systematically from initial sensory experience to complex social interaction, each introducing some level of organization that is necessary for the overall progression from one to the other, but that simultaneously accounts for specific aspect of cognitive functioning. These domains are not conceived as physiological regions of the brain or as static loci of meaning and organization. Rather, they describe functional domains through which experience would pass *as a current*.

The analyses of literature presented in this study serve to elucidate the functioning of these functional domains. The conflict engendered by the structuring and restructuring

of experience within these domains often remains beneath the threshold of conscious awareness in our day to day functioning, and expressing the nuances of somatic responses, conflicted boundaries of self identity and conflicted expressions of symbolized meaning literary come across in a fragmented way in unmediated testimony. Literary (and filmic) expression makes available various means of artistic distortion that facilitate the expression of conflicted narrative content that is often censored from spontaneous communication. The interplay of tensions across the boundaries between the functional domains, and the ongoing evolution of symbolized meaning is more easily represented in a narrative medium. It is therefore my hope that the examination of the narratives presented in this study will facilitate the reader's understanding of the dynamic by which meaning evolves, and the tensions that arise in narrative cohesion over the course of that evolution.

In outlining the five functional domains that comprise this model of cognitive functioning and subjectivity, I drew upon existent philosophical and semiotic theories of subjectivity (many of which are touched upon in the first chapter of this study). Having done so, and having established the way in which a dynamic current of experience/subjectivity would function within those domains, it became apparent that this model could provide a cohesive explanation for the various kinds of traumatic symptoms and "dissociative disorders" commonly associated with traumatic crisis. In consequence, this theoretical approach provides both a model of subjectivity, and a way of viewing traumatic conflict that brings together theoretical views, which have hitherto been regarded as mutually preclusive, allowing each to contribute in a meaningful way to a

unified understanding of trauma. In this way, it has not been my objective to join into the acrimonious debate that has divided the study of trauma. Indeed, my intention is to create a way of integrating many of the meaningful contributions that have been made to the field in such a way that they need not negate one another.

With a dynamic model of subjectivity and cognitive functioning, it is no longer meaningful or necessary to debate whether a "true" narrative of traumatic experience must come from the traumatized individual or from those who bear witness to that trauma from the social domain. Although each individual (whether directly traumatized or whether indirectly, by bearing witness to that trauma) has her own apprehension of any particular trauma, each contributes to an *overall* dynamic by which shared, symbolized meaning is constructed. The fragmentation of meaning and identity that results from trauma is experienced first by those who are directly traumatized. Some form of fragmentation is propogated socially as well, however, when trauma testimony or narrative brings heterogeneous content to social discourse, thereby weakening or even severing the linguistic bond that ties the participants within a discursive community to one another. Indeed, as I will argue more fully in this study, there are two traumatic processes at work that oppose one another, and it is this opposition (the dissolution of individually held meaning and identity versus the dissolution of socially sanctioned meaning and identity), each driven by its own specific urgency, that renders "trauma" (actually multiple *traumata*) so difficult to resolve.

The distinction between individual trauma and collective/social trauma is of particular importance, and it has an enormous bearing on the study of trauma itself. Each

individual has her own apprehension of any given trauma and ultimately, no one can articulate or interpret the experience of trauma for anyone else. Indeed the witness to trauma narrative, who may herself be traumatized to some degree by the act of witnessing, knows only what she herself has experienced. This is not only true of trauma, of course, but of all experience. Traumatic experience, however, poses a unique difficulty for the survivor(s), the witness(es), and the discursive community to which they belong. Trauma is unique among the human experiences in the *degree* to which it demands the redefinition and reorganization of meaning and identity, both as these are apprehended by the individual, and as they are presumed to be shared socially (i.e., via the collective interaction of members within a discursive community).

Trauma, in other words, is an experience (not necessarily related to an event) that challenges the accepted schemata of symbolized meaning to which we all must subscribe if communication and social interaction are to be successful, and therefore the knowledge of traumatic events and testimony of traumatic experience also pose a challenge to the witness, listener, or reader. As members of the social domain, we are obliged to be engaged. Beyond this, however, we possess only knowledge of our individual experience and reaction to traumatic narrative. This is true whether we accept that narrative and are, in some measure, shaken in our apprehension of meaning and identity by an experience we do not directly share, or whether we reject that narrative and yet, must defend our apprehension of meaning and identity against a narrative of heterogeneous experience we do not accept. The complexities of negotiating a consensus among participants in a discursive community are only compounded by the fact that each participant is both an

individual who experiences *and* a social being. As a result, this conflict plays out both *within* the individual herself, and between that individual and the discursive communities to which she belongs. It is scarcely a wonder, then, that trauma should pose such a difficulty to comprehension or that it should engender such discord even among those who sincerely wish to understand it.[9]

In this study, I will argue that the objective of language as the medium of social communication and mutual comprehension is to forge a social bond among individuals, even as those individuals are divided by their own privately held apprehension of meaning and identity. Only by accepting and behaving as though meaning is mutually held and shared does social interaction become possible, even as the innate separation of individual cognitive processes guarantees that the only thing we truly share is the compact to behave as though meaning exists and is unified at a social level. The social project is a reductive one, in which each participant in any given discursive community must compromise in order to support what can be presumed to be shared, (e.g., some elements of personal experience must be left out of this compact of "shared" meaning in the interest of this compromise). A trauma survivor may speak of her traumatic experience, but this testimony or narrative is itself constructed in the intersection of

[9] This focus on the negotiation of meaning also leads me away from the notion that is built on the American Psychiatric Association's diagnosis of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, that traumatic crisis (if indeed a crisis is always the result of traumatic experience) is pathological in nature, or that the traumatized individual needs to be "treated" by forcing her to reinterpret her experiences from within a socially sanctioned interpretation of her trauma. See American Psychiatric Association, *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders: DSM-IV*, 4th ed. (Washington, D. C.: American Psychiatric Association, 1994) 424-29. While the traumatized individual may need relief from those symptoms generated by traumatic conflict, the objective of that treatment should not be the "repair" of her apprehension of meaning and identity. Rather, both the traumatized individual and her potential care-giver should recognize that they are both engaged in the renegotiation of meaning in the wake of evidence that existent, symbolized meaning schemata do not adequately reflect or express the sum of all potential somatosensory (i.e., human) experience.

unmediated experience and the need to be understood by others. As such, the survivor's narrative is already compromised in the interest of mutual comprehension once it has been expressed within language. Further, no interpretation of the survivor's narrative is possible, since every individual who receives that narrative does so via the mediation of his or her own apprehension of meaning and identity. Upon its reception, the trauma narrative has already become, in this way, the witness's own narrative.

When we attempt to understand trauma as researchers, we automatically do so via our own experience of trauma, since it is impossible to escape the apprehension of meaning and reality that our own experiences have forged. It is therefore problematic, possibly even unethical to interpret or "analyze" the traumatic testimony of others in an effort to explain the phenomena of trauma. Certainly, we must look at the trauma testimony and trauma narratives of others in order to come to a greater understanding of the subject, however, the researcher must be aware that, in the act of doing so, she is actively participating in the renegotiation and compromise by which shared meaning is reestablished. The danger then lies in actually interpreting the *experience* of those who provide testimony in an effort to rectify the trauma that both survivor and witness share – the dissolution of the linguistic bond between them. This makes any study of trauma (including this one) a charged subject. While being aware of this, I have consciously tried to avoid providing an interpretation of actual survivor testimony. Rather, I have chosen to present a number of literary and filmic narratives as illustrative examples of my theoretical assertions. This choice may present difficulties for some who are engaged with the topic of trauma, because many researchers commonly view "unmediated

testimony" as the more authentic expression of traumatic experience.[10] I would argue that this view ignores the reality that "unmediated testimony" is, for all of its immediacy, still a constructed narrative. While there is a precedent for using literary narratives to elucidate our understanding of trauma (i.e., Caruth, Felman, Laub, Shay[11] and Langer), my decision to use such narratives rather than testimony is ultimately derived from the desire to avoid overlaying actual first-person testimony given by trauma survivors of their personal experiences with my own interpretations.

The choice to utilize literary and filmic narratives brings up the question as to how we should define a trauma narrative, and whether it needs to be a first-person narrative that "realistically" represents the actual events (such as any exist) that are regarded as the origin of traumatic crisis. (Indeed, does trauma need to be defined as a "crisis," or is this simply the only kind of traumatic experience that finds social validation?) Lawrence Langer, a literary scholar turned Holocaust critic, argued in his earlier work that fictive narrative was often a more adequate expression of traumatic experience.[12] He subsequently abandoned that view in favor of trauma narratives as found in videotaped testimony, specifically the Holocaust testimonies recorded in the Video Archive for Holocaust Testimonies at Yale.[13] The presumption that oral narrative

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[10] See note 3 in Chapter 1.

[11] Jonathan Shay, *Odysseus in America: Combat Trauma and the Trials of Homecoming* (New York: Scribner, 2002), and Jonathan Shay, *Achilles in Vietnam: Combat Trauma and the Undoing of Character* (New York: Maxwell Macmillan International, 1994).

[12] Lawrence L. Langer, *The Holocaust and the Literary Imagination* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1975).

[13] Although Langer's later position was that video testimony provided a more accurate representation of traumatic experience than the literary representations he had earlier championed, he himself admitted that, while video testimony may be more direct, that medium does not truly provide an undistorted testimony. As he notes in *Holocaust Testimonies: The Ruins of Memory*: "In the beginning, I was convinced that these [taped survivor] testimonies represented fully spontaneous narratives, unmediated by devices analogous to,

is "unmediated" testimony or that oral, first-person narrative is more authentic, or somehow more "true" than literary narrative in providing an unconscious view into the survivor's inner experience, has itself fallen under criticism.[14]

Defining trauma narrative by its medium, by the degree of "literary" embellishment attributed to it, or by how "literally" the narrative is perceived to represent a traumatic event is an inadequate way of delimiting that narrative form. Indeed, such means of definition are very much akin to the effort to define trauma using tautological references to the "event" believed to have produced that crisis. Just as it is necessary to move away from a definition of traumatic crisis that relies on external circumstances (the event and the social recognition that such an event is legitimately "traumatic") in order to define it from within the innate structure of that experience, so too it is necessary to define the trauma narrative from within the structure of the narrative itself. The fact that a narrative depicts an unfortunate event, or that is presented as a oral testimony, in other words, does not in and of itself make a narrative a trauma narrative. Rather, I will define the trauma narrative in terms of its innate, narrative structure, and the capacity of that structure to depict the fragmentation of meaning and identity characteristic of traumatic crisis – a characteristic that I would define as *polylexia*, whereby the traumatic experience

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though not identical with, ones we find in consciously contrived literary texts. But this expectation appears not to be supported by evidence." Lawrence L. Langer, *Holocaust Testimonies: The Ruins of Memory* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1991) 13.

[14] Laub also privileges taped testimony, going so far as to assert that the taped testimony constitutes a psychoanalytic dialogue (Felman and Laub 70). This position has rightly been challenged by Leys: "On this model, survivor and interviewer are brought together in an oral or face-to-face encounter in which the interviewer becomes the listener-analyst who is marked by the trauma but, unlike the victim, has the objectivity and detachment to distance himself from it" (269).

can only fully be represented by creating competing narrative realities such that these can neither be merged, nor separated.

In this way, it is possible and even necessary to examine the trauma narrative according to the structure of the narrative itself by examining the conflict of heterogeneous experience, the need to negotiate meaning and, most importantly, the silence created not by an inability to speak of trauma, but by an inability to form a single, adequate, linear narrative of experience and identity. A trauma narrative can then be distinguished from a narrative of an unfortunate experience by innate characteristics, without reference to intentional fallacy. In its innate structure, the "successful" trauma narrative as I define it here, conveys the inadequacy of existent symbolized meaning to express the heterogeneous experience of trauma, and the resulting *need* for a polyglossic representation in order to fully express and communicate traumatic experience. The silence of trauma – actually the inadequacy of existent symbolized terms and relations – must be recreated in the listener or reader, rather than narrated. Traumatic experience can be conveyed as readily (indeed, arguably more readily) in a literary narrative, and the format of the narrative (narrative perspective, degree of realism, etc.) should be subordinate to the objective of conveying experience.

In order to examine the innate structure of trauma narrative (as defined in this study), I have chosen two literary narratives as the focus of the final three chapters in this study: Arthur Schnitzler's *Traumnovelle*, and Russell Banks's *The Sweet Hereafter*. (I also draw on the filmic adaptations of these narratives – Kubrick's *Eyes Wide Shut* and Egoyan's *The Sweet Hereafter* – wherever these renditions lend clarity to the literary

analyses.) Although there were many narratives from which I might have chosen, I selected these two works as my primary focus because they most clearly and succinctly illustrate the broadest range of theoretical features of the model that I plan to discuss. The organization of the narratives, in other words, allowed me to move through the theoretical discussion in a similarly organized way, thereby making it easier for the reader to follow.

I begin these narrative analyses with *Traumnovelle* specifically because it is not a "trauma narrative" in the traditional sense – that is, it does not depict any sort of event that is socially recognized as being traumatic. In beginning here, I hope to lead the reader away from the expectation that trauma should arise in response to a particular kind of event (indeed, one may argue that there is no discrete, precipitous event in the novella at all, but rather and aggregation of experiences that gradually build to a traumatic crisis). The traumatic crisis depicted in *Traumnovelle* is a crisis of inner, subjective experience – specifically, of a mid-life crisis. The novella follows the entire course of that crisis from its initial emergence to its ultimate resolution, while the quality of that crisis facilitates an examination of the first part of the dynamic model of subjectivity and cognitive functioning presented in the second chapter. The focus of this first narrative analysis is primarily on the internal experience of crisis, rather than on the renegotiation of meaning through social interaction, although some reference to the role of the discursive community in the formation of meaning is unavoidable.

The Sweet Hereafter, which I will examine in the fourth and fifth chapters of this study, deals with subject matter that would indeed be traditionally viewed as a representation of a traumatic event, although it would not, in all likelihood, be viewed as

a trauma narrative. (The author was not involved in a similar event, and therefore while the narrative may express an understanding of trauma derived from personal experience, the narrative cannot be said to constitute a testimony.) The narrative presents, as monologue, the traumatic reactions of four distinct characters to the same, ostensibly shared event. This narrative structure will allow me to examine the unique quality of the individual's response to a specific event based on his or her prior experiences, and this will be my focus in the fourth chapter in this study. *The Sweet Hereafter* is also exemplary in its clear focus on social interaction, and on ethical aspects of trauma, especially the religious, and the legal treatment of trauma. The final chapter of this study will focus on these aspects of the novella, and in particular, the way in which shared meaning is renegotiated and the pragmatic concerns that shape that renegotiation.

The status of these narratives as trauma narratives is based solely on their narrative structure. They are not "testimonies" given by traumatized individuals, and although I discuss the characters in relation to the narrative, their "experiences" do not represent actual experiences. Accordingly, the discussion of those narratives should not be understood as an analysis of those characters as though they possessed actual thought processes. Rather, they are narrative *representations* of fragmented identity and cognitive functioning. In these narrative analyses, I am merely interested in the way in which conflicted narrative realities (i.e., polylexia) can be recreated in literary and performance narrative (i.e., film and drama). The same polyglossic features can be found in actual survivor testimony (albeit generally in a less polished form), however as I have stated, I wanted to avoid overwriting the experience of the trauma survivor with my own

interpretations of his or her personal testimony. What is important in looking at the characters' inner monologues then, is the way in which each circumscribes conflicted narrative elements rather than the ontological veracity of their existence.

The objective of these literary and filmic analyses is twofold. On the one hand, they are intended to provide an example of the structure and functioning of the cognitive model presented in chapter two – a dynamic model of subjectivity and semiotic activity that strives to account for traumatic crisis from within the normal (i.e., non-pathological) functioning of subjectivity. It is also my objective, on the other hand, to propose the trauma narrative as a unique and unified genre of narrative that is defined not by its subject matter, narrative perspective, or authorial intention, but rather, by its innate structure. The trauma narrative, in other words, can be defined by its successful expression of the fragmentation and polylexia, which result from traumatic experience and which characterize traumatic crisis. In order to adequately fulfill these objectives, I have given unusually detailed, almost page-by-page analyses of the two primary narratives in chapters three through five. While such a detailed reading is not customary in literary studies, I feel that it is necessary in this case in order to show how the trauma narrative, as I define it here, is characterized by its innate structure *as a whole.*

The scope of this project is quite large, embracing traumatic crisis at the level of cognitive functioning, of social interaction, and of narrative expression. With this study, I hope to allow traumatic crisis to inform and expand our understanding of subjectivity, meaning, and identity, rather than attempting to deal with the paradoxes engendered by traumatic crisis by adhering to what is an inadequate understanding of these. It is unusual

for someone in a department of language, literature and culture studies to write a dissertation of this sort, however my interests, background, and preparation extend well beyond the limitations of the department that I now call home. Certainly, the approach I have taken to trauma may be viewed by some to be highly charged, in particular my refutation that traumatic crisis should be regarded as pathology. It is not my intention to add fuel to what has already been, at times, a bitterly acrimonious debate. Rather, it is my hope that by expanding our presuppositions about subjectivity, and meaning, some of the debate dividing trauma research today can be laid to rest. The majority of those theoretical approaches that I reject as a comprehensive explanation for traumatic crisis contribute meaningfully to our understanding of trauma as a whole. By establishing a dynamic model of subjectivity, and thereby eliminating the need to conceive of subjectivity, meaning and identity as monolithic, many hitherto conflicting theories of trauma may ultimately be brought together to contribute to one another in a meaningful way.

The five chapters that comprise this study are laid out as follows:

Chapter one introduces the essential scholarly discourses on which this study will draw. This includes a brief overview of trauma theory, psychological models of trauma, philosophical discourse concerning subjectivity, linguistic theory of the subject and semiotic theory. This study will draw on all of these areas, and since it is possible that the reader may not be familiar with all of these topics, the first chapter will present core

assumptions about subjectivity from within the various discourses in which those assumptions are developed. This chapter will be of limited interest to the reader who is reasonably well versed in these areas, however, it provides a kind of map as to the origins of my thinking on the topic of trauma.

Chapter two is a largely theoretical chapter in which I present my own theory of subjectivity and semiotic activity as a dynamic process, subject to the same interactions and conflicts that characterize all dynamic systems. In this chapter, I define in great detail not only the structure of five organizational domains, but their effects upon experience that is passed, as a current, through them. I also outline the potential for conflict that exists when experience passes from one domain into the next, and the way in which such conflict is manifested as traumatic crisis. Although this chapter is largely theoretical, I also present a brief narrative analysis as a means of illustrating the theory.

Chapter three presents a detailed narrative analysis of Arthur Schnitzler's *Traumnovelle* as a trauma narrative (as defined in this study). The focus of this analysis is on the individual experience of trauma (i.e., that which cannot be shared), the division of subjectivity that defines the traumatic experience and its aetiology in previously existing, subjective experience, rather than in a "traumatic event." This chapter looks at both the emergence of crisis and its resolution.

Chapter four presents the first half of a narrative analysis of Russell Banks, *The Sweet Hereafter*. The novel depicts an event commonly recognized to be traumatic (e.g., a fatal school bus accident), but that event is described from the disparate perspectives of four separate individuals in five distinct narrative sections. The focus of this chapter will

be on an expanded application of the discussion of individual trauma begun in chapter three, and will deal specifically with the first two of the five narrative sections.

The fifth chapter presents the second half of the narrative analysis begin in the preceding chapter. Unlike Chapter four, however, this chapter will focus on social trauma and the social resolution of trauma. By contrasting the dissolution of personal identity with the dissolution of social identity and social cohesion, this chapter examines the delicate balance that must be struck between constructing a narrative that is "true" (i.e., that reflects actual experience), and constructing a narrative that is believable (i.e., that can be socially shared.

Chapter 1: Where Signification Fails: A Redefinition of Trauma

> In the opinion of various Arab authors […], the confusion [of language at Babel] was due to the trauma induced by the sight, terrifying no doubt, of the collapse of the tower. (Umberto Eco)[1]

1.0 Historical View of Trauma

Trauma as a subject of serious, albeit inconsistent, theoretical and scientific inquiry is generally accepted to have originated at the end of the nineteenth century. In his work on hysteria, French neurologist Jean-Martin Charcot transformed the Salpêtrière, a longstanding Parisian mental asylum, into a facility where the most modern investigations in Europe into the new fields of psychiatry and neurology were conducted (Herman, *Trauma* 10).[2] Freud himself traveled to Paris to learn about what Charcot termed the "Great Neurosis" (Herman, *Trauma* 11). Charcot's methods consisted overwhelmingly of a positivistic cataloguing of symptoms and, regrettably, the public

[1] Umberto Eco, *The Search for the Perfect Language*, trans. James Fentress (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1995) 9.

[2] My references in this initial, historical section are largely drawn from Judith Herman's book, *Trauma and Recovery*, not because I fully endorse her view of trauma, but because of the clarity of her overview and the concise manner in which she has picked out the most critical aspects of the emerging study of trauma. In her earlier work, Herman was among the first to examine women's trauma, moving the focus of research away from Vietnam, and towards issues of domestic and sexual abuse in the early 1980s. Judith L. Herman, and Lisa Hirschman, *Father-Daughter Incest* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1981). Although her work is well respected by many in the field, there are some who view her work as problematic. As Leys notes, Herman privileges the notion that a recovery from trauma must entail the integration of the historical "truth" about the experience; an objective that is driven in part by a moral obligation to the "truth" which has "a public or collective value as well" (108-9). I have also chosen to draw on Bessel van der Kolk for a summary of Freud and Janet, since his treatment of the two men's work has been largely instrumental in reviving scholarly interest in Janet's work, and examines both the differences and intersection in the theories of each. Bessel A. van der Kolk, and Onno van der Hart, "The Intrusive Past: The Flexibility of Memory and the Engraving of Trauma," *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*, ed. Cathy Caruth (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995) 158-182. It is not my purpose to present an exhaustive introduction to the emergence of dynamic psychology or the earliest scientific understanding of trauma.

display of those who suffered them before a morbidly fascinated assembly of spectators at what were called the Tuesday Lectures.[3] This not withstanding, his efforts established a consistent departure from prior existing notions, impossibly naïve and often dismissive, that hysteria was the product of a malfunctioning or displaced uterus, or simply evidence of pernicious female malingering.[4]

Before these organized efforts, only isolated attempts had been made to adopt a more humane view of hysteria, and the majority of those attempts tended to view hysteria as the result of organic disruption in the brain's functioning and ability to process emotion.[5] This notion, which proved to be such sound reasoning that it has persisted on one form or another to the present day, is related to current theories of alexithymia,[6] "the incapacity to give symbolic/linguistic representation to internal affective states," thought by some to result from "a fear of affective states" (van der Kolk, *Psychological* 193). A model similar to Briquet's was proposed in 1869 by Reynolds, who postulated further that a "dissociation of pain originated from changes in the patient's body image" (van der

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[3] For selected excerpts from nine of Charcot's Tuesday Lectures, see Jean Martin Charcot, *Charcot the Clinician: The Tuesday Lessons. Excerpts from Nine Case Presentations on General Neurology Delivered at the Salpêtrière Hospital in 1887-88*, ed. and trans. Christopher G. Goetz (New York: Raven Press, 1987). Jan Goldstein provides a standard account of the evolution of French psychiatry in *Console and Classify*; a classic work in the history of science, and the first book about French psychiatry to be produced by an English speaker. Jan E. Goldstein, *Console and Classify: The French Psychiatric Profession in the Nineteenth Century* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987).

[4] Herman, *Trauma* 10. Other early researchers who contributed to our modern understanding of trauma include John Erichsen, who offered a physiological explanation for trauma in the 1860's and Paul Oppenheim, a neurologist in Berlin who posited that *traumatic neurosis* was the result of organic alterations in the functioning of the brain. See Paul Lerner, "Rationalizing the Therapeutic Arsenal: German Neuropsychiatry in World War I," *Medicine and Modernity: Public Health and Medical Care in Nineteenth- and Twentieth-Century Germany*, ed. Manfred Berg and Geoffrey Cocks (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997) 121-48.

[5] For an overview of early, physiologically-based definitions of trauma, see Allan Young, *The Harmony of Illusions: Inventing Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1995).

[6] See Henry Krystal, and John H. Krystal, *Integration and Self Healing: Affect, Trauma, Alexithymia* (Hillsdale, N.J.: Analytic Press, 1988).

Kolk, *Psychological* 6). What makes Charcot unique, then, is not the absolute novelty of his ideas, but the organization in his advance of them.

Like Briquet and Reynolds, Charcot situated the aetiology of dissociative phenomena in alterations to the brain that originated with exposure to traumata, yet it was not until the mid 1890s that psychological trauma was effectively advanced as the cause of hysterical symptoms. This conclusion was arrived at concurrently by Janet, who termed the characteristic alteration in consciousness "dissociation," and Freud, together with Breuer, who used instead the term "double consciousness" (Herman, *Trauma* 12). Similar in approach, Janet and Freud nevertheless arrived at different explanations for the fragmentation which they observed in hysteria patients.[7] Janet founded a descriptive model based on the assumption that cognitive schemata act to structure human consciousness; an epistemic approach that biomedical researchers such as van der Kolk, Van der Hart, and Greenburg would later pursue.[8] Freud, by contrast, eventually developed a model founded on the intentional repression of tabooed memory and experience; an ethical correlate to Janet's proposal adopted that was broadly by psychoanalytic and objects-relations theorists such as Fairbairn, Klein, and Bergler.

Janet, who coined the term "unconscious," regarded memory as "the central organizing apparatus of the mind, which categorizes and integrates all aspects of experience and automatically integrates them into ever-enlarging and flexible meaning

[7] For an examination of the rivalry that erupted between Janet and Freud, see C. Perry, and J. R. Laurence, "Mental Processes Outside Awareness: The Contributions of Freud and Janet," *The Unconscious Reconsidered*, ed. Kenneth S. Bowers and Donald Meichenbaum (New York: Wiley, 1984) 227-72.
[8] Bessel A. van der Kolk, "Trauma and Memory," *Traumatic Stress: The Effects of Overwhelming Experience on Mind, Body, and Society*, ed. Bessel A. van der Kolk, Alexander McFarlane and Lars Weisaeth (New York: The Guilford Press, 1996) 279-302.

schemes" (van der Kolk, *Intrusive* 159). The individual, he reasoned, filters memory, invoking what is relevant and banning at the borders of consciousness what is irrelevant, thereby maintaining a necessary cohesion and permitting the efficacious processing of new information (van der Kolk, *Intrusive* 159). This kind of schematization structures but also delimits the accommodation of experience in conscious awareness and as a result, a division is formed that produces two unique and mutually preclusive kinds of memory: so-called *narrative memory* in which experience is held, verbalized and subject to linguistic operations such as metaphor and metonymy (van der Kolk, *Intrusive* 172), and its counterpart, *traumatic memory*, in which experience is held without processing or conscious awareness (van der Kolk, *Intrusive* 163).[9]

Van der Kolk and Van der Hart summarized Janet's theoretical framework for the processing of traumatic experience, explaining that:

> Frightening or novel experiences may not easily fit into existing cognitive schemes and either may be remembered with particular vividness or may totally resist integration. Under extreme conditions, existing meaning schemes may be entirely unable to accommodate frightening experiences, which causes the memory of these experiences to be stored differently and not be available for retrieval under ordinary conditions; it becomes dissociated from conscious awareness and voluntary control. (*Intrusive* 160)

[9] See note 3 in the Introduction.

The result of this method of processing is that the individual's adaptation to what is frightening or novel is imperfect, and the later compulsive revisiting of the source of traumatic crisis therefore represents attempts to adapt (van der Kolk, *Intrusive* 160).

In 1891, four years after Janet published his findings as *L'automatisme psychologique*,[10] Freud and Breuer published their own thesis that, when dissociation occurs in cases of hysteria, the subject has returned to the traumatic state, and from this return, a rudimentary splitting of consciousness occurs that is ubiquitous to all cases of hysteria. Breuer suggests in that text, *Studies on Hysteria*, that "an idea becomes pathogenic because it has been received during a special psychical state (a dissociated state of consciousness) and has from the first remained outside the ego."[11] Breuer and Freud also maintained that the hysteric response was rooted in a disturbance of memory, stating that "hysterics suffer mainly from reminiscences" (Breuer 7).

Only a few years later, Freud began to pursue an explanatory model that diverged from that of either Breuer or Janet, largely because of their rejection of the sexual aspects of his theory.[12] In so doing, he broke entirely with the line of thinking set into motion by Charcot at the Salpêtrière. In 1895 Freud proposed the idea of a "defensive hysteria," in which traumatic memory was actively repressed out of a sense of guilt regarding its

[10] Janet, Pierre. *L'automatisme psychologique: essai de psychologie expérimentale sur les formes inférieures de l'activité humaine* (Paris: F. Alcan, 1889).
[11] Joseph Breuer, and Sigmund Freud, "Studies in Hysteria," *Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, ed. and trans. J. Strachey, vol. 2 (London: Hogarth Press, 1955) 167.
[12] Sigmund Freud, *The Complete Letters of Sigmund Freud to Wilhelm Fliess, 1877-1904*, ed. and trans. Jeffrey Moussaieff Masson (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1985) 74.

content.[13] Not simply unavailable or resistant to processing because it falls outside of the available cognitive schemata, Freud claimed that the material of repression was the child's relationship with his or her parents, which is characterized by sexual and aggressive ideas and impulses, and the subsequent censuring of those impulses.[14] Regrettably, Freud's assertion that guilt motivated the retention of experience in traumatic memory ultimately resulted in a dismissal of the patient and led to the invalidating belief that her crisis originated not with the trauma of sexual exploitation, but rather, with the trauma that resulted when her own Oedipal wishes were fulfilled.[15]

In an 1896 report on eighteen case studies entitled *Aetiology of Hysteria*, Freud stated: "the ultimate cause of hysteria is always the seduction of a child by an adult. The actual event always occurs before the age of puberty, though the outbreak of the neurosis occurs after puberty. The symptoms of hysteria can only be understood if they are traced back to experiences which have a traumatic effect."[16] Freud claimed that the oedipal nature of the trauma and the shame it occasioned was the cause of its being suppressed. This constituted a radical break with his contemporaries, although like Janet, Freud posited a volitional return to the site of traumatic crisis. The so-called *repetition compulsion*, or what Rangell, van der Kolk and Horowitz would later come to term *traumatophilia* (van der Kolk, *Psychological* 3), represented the individual's effort to

[13] Sigmund Freud, "An Autobiographical Study," *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, ed. and trans. James Strachey, vol. 20 (London: Hogarth Press, 1959) 29-31.
[14] Sigmund Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, ed. and trans. James Strachey (New York: Basic Books, 1955) 294-298.
[15] Freud, *Autobiographical* 34.
[16] Sigmund Freud, "The Aetiology of Hysteria," *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, ed. and trans. James Strachey, et al., vol. 3 (London: Hogarth Press, 1962) 162.

return to the source of outrage in order to "change a passive stance to one of active coping."[17]

In the *Aetiology of Hysteria*, Freud sums up the problematic for the scientific community in bold terms: "I therefore put forward the thesis that at the bottom of every case of hysteria there are one or more occurrences of premature sexual experience, occurrences which belong to the earliest years of childhood, but which can be reproduced through the work of psycho-analysis in spite of the intervening decades" (203). The implications of this claim that hysteria originates with "perverted acts against children" was utterly devastating, given the fact that hysteria was so common among women, and it could not and would not be believed by Freud's peers. He withdrew the assertion, renouncing his study not long after it was published.[18]

Freud's *volte face* is often scathingly dismissed by contemporary scholarship as unrepentant misogyny and "a matter of scandal" (Herman, *Trauma* 18). Nevertheless, his abandonment of the view that hysteria was a traumatic response to sexual abuse and his return to the hysteric's own sexual desires as the source of her symptoms was not the result of Freud's failure to accurately locate and lend credence to the traumatic origins of the disorder. It was, rather, a response to rigorous censorship by his peers which would have rendered all of his subsequent efforts in the development of psychoanalytic theory

[17] Sara R. Horowitz, *Voicing the Void: Muteness and Memory in Holocaust Fiction* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1997). Van der Kolk, *Psychological* 5. See also Leo Rangell, "Discussion of the Buffalo Creek Disaster: the Course of Psychic Trauma," *American Journal of Psychiatry* 133 (1976): 313-316. Mardi Jon Horowitz, *Stress Response Syndromes* (Northvale, N.J.: Jason Aronson, 2001).
[18] Jeffrey Moussaieff Masson, *The Assault on Truth: Freud's Suppression of the Seduction Theory* (New York: Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, 1984) 11-13. Also of interest is Freud's own account, in which he states: "[…] I was at last obliged to recognize that these scenes of seduction had never taken place, and that they were only phantasies which my patients had made up or which I myself had perhaps forced on them." (Freud, *Autobiographical* 34).

futile had he failed to retract his "seduction theory" (Masson 12). Herman notes that, only shortly after publishing *Aetiology of Hysteria*, Freud wrote to a colleague, Fliess, and stated: "I am as isolated as you could wish me to be: the word has been given out to abandon me, and a void is forming around me."[19] What is remembered, however, is not the traumatic abandonment and censorship of Freud by his peers, but his failure to persevere in his claims. Freud never again dared raise the question of the connection between traumatic sexual abuse and hysteria (Herman, *Trauma* 19).

1.0.1 Public and Private Repression

Just as the inception of trauma theory is characterized by a division between the predominant perspectives of Janet's epistemic and Freud's ethical analyses, and followed by a subsequent cessation of nearly all discourse on the matter, so that study has continued. Herman describes its erratic past in terms of a history of "episodic amnesias" (*Trauma* 2). The censorial suppression of Freud's "seduction theory" has been persistently repeated, whether by act of volitional repression or not, as various sites of trauma have been identified and validated with the support of public outrage, only eventually to fall silent. Ironically, Freud's same "seduction theory" claim is being restated by modern trauma scholars a century after he first proposed it, notably by Herman, Henke, Caruth, and Brown, who have been confronted with the ironic necessity of re-establishing that rape, domestic and child abuse do indeed constitute significant

[19] Freud, *Letters* 185.

traumata.[20] As Herman notes: "Repeatedly in the last century, similar lines of inquiry have been taken up and abruptly abandoned, only to be rediscovered much later. Classic documentation of fifty or one hundred years ago often read like contemporary works. Though the field has in fact an abundant and rich tradition, it has been periodically forgotten and must be periodically reclaimed" (*Trauma* 7).

Herman identifies three major periods of time in which an awareness of psychological trauma has "surfaced into public consciousness" (*Trauma* 9), each backed by an active political agenda which supported that awareness.[21] The first of these, examined above, was the inquiry into hysteria, which Herman states originated with the "republican, anticlerical political movement of the late nineteenth century in France."[22] The second was combat related trauma, which "began in England and the United States after the First World War and reached its peak after the Vietnam War."[23] Variously called shell shock or combat neurosis, the traumatic condition produced by combat was first

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[20] See Herman, *Trauma* 30; Caruth, *Unclaimed* 11; Suzette A. Henke, *Shattered Subjects: Trauma and Testimony in Women's Life-Writing* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998) xii; Laura Brown, "Not Outside the Range: One Feminist Perspective on Psychic Trauma," *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*, ed. Cathy Caruth (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995) 101.

[21] Herman's *Trauma and Recovery*, which has become a classic in the field of trauma research, sets out to redefine Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder as "complex PTDS." I will draw on the organized and extremely detailed examination of trauma symptoms presented in that work throughout the next sections.

[22] Herman, *Trauma* 9. See references to Charcot and the initial investigations into trauma in note 3 in this chapter.

[23] Herman, *Trauma* 28. For an account of shell shock during WWI that are based on first-person (diary) testimony, see Charles Samuel Myers, *Shell Shock in France, 1914-18* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1940). For a recent study on WWI trauma see Peter Leese, *Shell Shock: Traumatic Neurosis and the British Soldiers of the First World War* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002). A standard work in the study of combat trauma is Abram Kardiner, *The Traumatic Neuroses of War* (New York: P. B. Hoeber, 1941). For a study of Second World War combat trauma, see Roy R. Grinker, and John P. Spiegel, *Men Under Stress* (Philadelphia, Blakiston, 1949). A seminal work in the study of Vietnam trauma can be found in: Robert Jay Lifton, *Home from the War: Vietnam Veterans: Neither Victims nor Executioners* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1971). One of the most comprehensive, empirical studies of Vietnam trauma is provided in: *Legacies of Vietnam*, the completion of the Vietnam Generation Study that was funded by the Veterans' Association: Arthur Egendorf, et al., *Legacies of Vietnam: Comparative Adjustment of Veterans and Their Peers: a Study* (Washington D.C.: U.S. Government Publishing Office, 1981).

introduced as a diagnostic possibility in 1980, when the American Psychiatric Association finally included Post Traumatic Stress Disorder in the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual for Mental Disorders*.[24]

The third site of traumatic inquiry identified by Herman is the "public awareness of sexual and domestic violence," which began to come to the fore of discussion through the women's movement in the 1970s.[25] The efforts of organizations such as the New York Radical Feminists and the National Organization for Women helped to bring about legislative reform protecting women against rape and sexual assault, and encouraged women to come forward with their stories (Herman, *Trauma* 29-30). To these three sites, van der Kolk adds a fourth category of recognized trauma. Shortly after the close of World War II, an investigation of the long-term effects of the Holocaust was initiated as

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[24] The diagnosis, *Post Traumatic Stress Disorder* was defined by the American Psychiatric Association in 1980 largely in response to Vietnam trauma, and constitutes the first diagnostic recognition of traumatic sequelae. The definition, while groundbreaking, has not been without controversy. Allan Young contends that the diagnosis constitutes nothing more than a historical construct (Young, 5). Ian Hacking argues further, that the diagnosis serves the purpose of creating a categorical identity that, among other things, enables victims to be reimbursed by their insurance carrier for treatment, and allows the diagnosis to be utilized in a court of law in establishing degrees of culpability and the damages awarded: Ian Hacking, "Making Up People," *Reconstructing Individualism: Autonomy, Individuality, and the Self in Western Thought*, ed. Thomas C. Heller, et al. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1986) 226-36. Another analysis of the socio-political complications connected with the diagnosis of PTSD is presented in: Wilbur J. Scott, "PTSD in DSM-III: A Case in the Politics of Diagnosis and Disease," *Social Problems* 37 (1990): 294-310. For a short history of the evolution of PTSD as a diagnosable disorder, see Berthold P.R. Gerson, and Ingrid V.E. Carlier, "Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder: The History of a Recent Concept," *British Journal of Psychiatry* 161 (1992): 742-48. For an examination of the conflict between current understandings and applications of PTSD, and the original conception of the diagnosis, see Rachel Yehuda, and Alexander C. McFarlane, "Conflict between Current Knowledge about Posttraumatic Stress Disorder and its Original Conceptual Basis," *American Journal of Psychiatry* 152 (1995): 1705-13.

[25] Herman, *Trauma* 9. Domestic and sexual abuse is initially referred to as a "problem without a name" in the seminal work of the American feminist movement, *The Feminine Mystique.* See Betty Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique* (New York: Norton, 2001). For an in-depth epidemiological analysis, see Diana E. H. Russell, *Sexual Exploitation: Rape, Child Sexual Abuse, and Workplace Harassment* (Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publications, 1984). For the definition of rape as a crime of violence, rather than a sexual act, see Susan Brownmiller, *Against Our Will: Men, Women, and Rape* (New York: Bantam Books, 1975). For a study of the psychological effects of rape on the victim and the correlation between war trauma and trauma that results from sexual abuse, see Ann W. Burgess and Lynda L. Holmstrom, "Rape Trauma Syndrome," *American Journal of Psychiatry* 131 (1974): 981-86.

independent from the war traumata. It has become a very active area of independent investigation that has, in turn, contributed significantly to trauma discourses such as child abuse, and other captivity-like situations (Herman, *Trauma* 74).

The reasons suggested for the persistent failure to found a consistent, ongoing theoretical or clinical discourse on trauma are expressed in various ways by different theorists. Freud summarized the medical practitioner's inability or unwillingness to formulate a validating and respectful assessment of the hysteria patient's plight: "He regards them as people who are transgressing the laws of his science – like heretics in the eyes of the orthodox. He attributes every kind of wickedness to them, accuses them of exaggeration, of deliberate deceit, of malingering. And he punishes them by withdrawing his interest from them."[26] Freud avails himself here of overt terms of judgment, transgression and heresy, that is, of ethics, and these are more or less reiterated in contemporary summaries of trauma's failure to assert itself as an ongoing and legitimate area of investigation. Herman explains that "those [witnesses] who attempt to describe the atrocities they have witnessed also risk their own credibility. To speak publicly about one's knowledge of atrocities is to invite the stigma that attaches to victims" (*Trauma* 2). This is borne out in instances of social or professional sanction such as the aforementioned censor of Freud's seduction theory or in the total dismissal of Sandor Ferenczi, for a time a favored student of Freud and a pioneer in the study of child abuse,

[26] Sigmund Freud, *Five Lectures on Psycho-analysis*, ed. and trans. James Strachey (New York: Norton, 1977) 12.

whose powerful address of childhood trauma was vehemently silenced both by Freud himself, and by others in the professional community.[27]

In addressing what seems to be, at some level, an adversarial relationship between society and the traumatized, Herman sees evidence of Freudian repression operating at a social level in the public's failure to retain a conscious awareness of trauma and its potential to recur. As stated above, Freud defined repression as resulting from guilt and the forbidding of what is viewed as transgressive. "The knowledge of horrible events periodically intrudes into public awareness but is rarely retained for long. Denial, repression, and dissociation operate on a social as well as an individual level" (Herman, *Trauma* 2). Since what is being censored when repression occurs in the Freudian model is perceived as being transgressive, it would appear that a tendency to blame the victim would naturally follow. In fact, research into the social repercussions of trauma substantiates this tendency. Herman indicates this when she states: "The study of psychological trauma must constantly contend with this tendency to discredit the victim or to render her invisible. Throughout the history of the field, dispute has raged over whether patients with post-traumatic conditions are entitled to care and respect, or deserving of contempt, whether they are genuinely suffering or malingering, whether their histories are true or false, and if false, whether imagined or maliciously fabricated" (8).

It is clear that, for an awareness of trauma to be retained for any length of time or to attain any degree of currency, the event considered to have produced it must find

[27] Arnold W. Rachman, *Sandor Ferenczi: The Psychotherapist of Tenderness and Passion* (Northvale, N.J.: J. Aronson, 1997) 252-56.

sufficient popular endorsement. Without a broad basis of social interest as a support, Herman observes that:

> […] the bystander usually succumbs to the temptation to look the other way […] When the victim is already devalued (a woman, a child), she may find that the most traumatic events of her life take place outside the realm of socially validated reality. Her experience becomes unspeakable. […] to hold traumatic reality in consciousness requires a social context that affirms and protects the victim and that joins victim and witness in a common alliance. […] The systematic study of psychological trauma therefore depends on the support of a political movement […] powerful enough to legitimate an alliance between investigators and patients to counteract the ordinary social processes of silencing and denial. (8-9)

The social decision to support or deny a claim to traumatic crisis, consequently, becomes a critical issue. Herman's observation that a process of traumatic repression may be active at the social level is both insightful and bold, pointing to a complex interaction in which the interests and agendas of society and of the individual seem to be working at cross purposes. As a thesis, however, it must be qualified since the social order and the individual are not ontological equivalencies possessing like consciousness. Still, if we accept Herman's proposition that primary processes such as repression are operating at a social level, one sees the tentative outline not just of a conflict of interests between

society and the individual, but a conflict of *opposing traumatic processes*. This pre-existing opposition, which essentially pits the individual against her social self, already constitutes a division of identity and will be demonstrated to be crucial to the understanding both of how trauma arises, and why it offers such resistance to resolution.

1.0.2 Fragmentation and Inconsistencies

The theoretical work done on trauma has accurately and consistently identified the fact that "trauma" fails to delineate itself as a uniform entity within the terms and concepts current to that inquiry. The term "trauma" remains at times openly undefined: "There is no firm definition for trauma, which has been given various descriptions at various times and under different names" (Caruth, *Unclaimed* 117). In other instances, an appeal is made to characterizations that can be understood as little more than place holders for what is unavailable to the terms of the discourse. These sophist arguments, essentially tautological formulas, fall back on reflexively accepted observations that trauma is very "bad," or incommensurate with what is "human." The most obvious example of such a tautology, and one often cited in exemplum of the inadequacy of available definitions is the ubiquitous "event that is outside the range of human experience," taken from the 1986 edition of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual for Mental Disorders*, the DSM-III. Other definitions evoke an empathetic sense of logical recognition in the reader, such as we see reflected in Herman's statement: "The ordinary response to atrocities is to banish them from consciousness. Certain violations of the

social compact are too terrible to utter aloud: this is the meaning of the word unspeakable" (*Trauma* 1).

Resistant to concretization, trauma is often characterized by tendencies which are established, almost invariably, with a focus on the precipitating event. Most theoretical approaches begin with a basic starting point whereby "in its most general definition, trauma describes an overwhelming experience or sudden or catastrophic events in which the response to the event occurs in the often delayed, uncontrolled repetitive appearance of hallucinations and other intrusive phenomena" (Caruth, *Unclaimed* 11). From here, a graded but unfixed evaluative scale is instituted according to which the likelihood of developing traumatic symptoms is suggested, based on the fact that "certain identifiable experiences increase the likelihood of harm. These include being taken by surprise, trapped or exposed to the point of exhaustion. The likelihood of harm is also increased when the traumatic events include physical violation or injury, exposed to extreme violence, or witnessing grotesque death. In each instance, the salient characteristic of each traumatic event is its power to inspire helplessness and terror" (Herman, *Trauma* 34).

This focus on the event is nonetheless an improvement over approaches to trauma taken just 15 years ago, when "the consequence of specific traumas – such as wars, concentration camp experiences, rape, civilian disasters, and child abuse – were generally described as separate entities" (van der Kolk, *Intrusive* 2). Since then, it is commonly understood that the responses "to overwhelming and uncontrollable events" share certain essential features (van der Kolk, *Intrusive* 2). The features of the marked traumatic

response are widely accepted. Within the consistency of the primary clinical symptoms, it is recognized that variables such as a person's basic personality, background, age, gender, and social status play a role in determining specificities (van der Kolk, *Intrusive* 2). The primary symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder, which are numerous, are most frequently categorized into three groupings; "called 'hyperarousal,' 'intrusion,' and 'constriction.' Hyperarousal reflects the persistent expectation of danger; intrusion reflects the indelible imprint of the traumatic moment; constriction reflects the numbing response of surrender" (Herman, *Trauma* 35).

Researchers who have attempted to characterize the division of identity that often accompanies traumatic crisis have often adopted a descriptive medical approach that catalogues the manifest oppositions. Herman presents a succinct tabular summation of the symptoms in *Trauma and Recovery*, and includes binary alternations in traumatic response as typified by narratives either of total victimization, or of total culpability; the contradictory manifestations of emotional flooding (hyperarousal) and emotional constriction; explosive or inhibited expressions of anger; hypermnesia and amnesia; and within existent memory, intrusive memory and narrative memory (121). Also noted are regular conceptualizations and distortions of the relationship with the perpetrator (such as one is identifiable) including identification with that person, revenge fantasies, notions of sharing a secret knowledge with or even "paradoxical gratitude" towards him or her (121). Other theorists such as Friedlander, Horowitz and Felman, scholars in the field of

Holocaust studies, have investigated the qualities of trauma literature as fragmented into opposing narratives and riddled with silences.[28]

Complex though these symptoms appear, the primary connection has most often been taken to exist between trauma and memory, first examined in the initial scientific inquiries into hysteria and extensively pursued within the domain of neuroscience.

> Traumatic events produce profound and lasting changes in physiological arousal, emotion, cognition, and memory. Moreover, traumatic events may sever these normally integrated functions from one another. The traumatized person may experience intense emotion but without clear memory of the event, or may be remembering everything in detail but without emotion. She may find herself in a constant state of vigilance and irritability without knowing why. Traumatic symptoms have a tendency to become disconnected from their source and to take on a life of their own. (Herman, *Trauma* 34)

The peculiarities of traumatic memory, accordingly, have been plotted as points of origin into the course of the traumatic response.

The response to trauma is as indeterminable as the precipitating event, eluding efforts at quantitative analysis. Herman concludes that "the severity of traumatic events cannot be measured on any single dimension; simplistic efforts to quantify trauma ultimately lead to meaningless comparisons of horror" (*Trauma* 33-34). Further,

[28] Saul Friedlander, *Probing the Limits of Representation: Nazism and the "Final Solution"* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992).

individual responses to traumatic experiences differ substantially, and therefore while those individual responses may share certain constant features, the pattern of symptoms that are manifested are shaped by factors such as childhood experiences and the manner in which the individual habitually adapts and deal with stressors (*Trauma* 58). Despite the fact that a certain unity of response has been recognized, Herman claims that what is founded is actually a heterogeneous grouping of traumata and traumatic disorders rather than any unified problematic and approach. The various individual responses to traumatic experiences suggest that post-traumatic stress disorder would be better defined as a spectrum of conditions (*Trauma* 119).

These sites of trauma and individual responses favor the event as a means of taxonomic management, grouping traumata by the kind of event to which the crisis is attributed. Beginning with "the experience of the soldier faced with sudden and massive death around him (Caruth, *Unclaimed* 11), the list of events has progressed so that: slowly, over the last quarter of a decade:

> […] physicians and psychiatrists have begun to reshape their thinking about physical and mental experience, including most recently the responses to a wide variety of other experiences, such as rape, child abuse, auto and industrial accidents, and so on, that are now understood in terms of the effects of *post-traumatic stress disorder*." (Caruth, *Unclaimed* 11)

Likewise, Herman summarizes the potential sites for trauma for "rape survivors and combat veterans, […] battered women and political prisoners, […] the survivors of vast

concentration camps and the survivors of small, hidden concentration camps created by tyrants who rule their homes" (*Trauma* 3). Diagnostically, these sites are frequently treated as separate: similar, but not identical, "the traumatic syndromes are complex disorders, requiring complex treatment" (Herman, *Trauma* 155-56).

Because the terms and the criteria being utilized are slippery, providing no foothold for an overarching theoretical definition, and in particular, because the discourse on trauma tends to emerge at socio-historical sites of pervasive national and social involvement or interest, new sites of trauma have had to be advanced independently as addenda, often by invoking prior and accepted sites. Thus Herman, "as a practicing therapist, […] was able to compare post-traumatic stress disorder precipitated by rape, sexual abuse, or battering with the symptoms of neurosis exhibited by war veterans and victims of terrorism" (Henke xiii). Henke, a psychoanalytic critic and literary scholar whose primary interest is in autobiographical testimony and scriptotherapy, goes on to expand Herman's category of "women's trauma," noting that "women often manifest symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder after a crisis precipitated by rape, incest, childhood sexual abuse, unwanted pregnancy, pregnancy-loss, or a severe illness that threatens the integrity of the body and compromises the sense of mastery that aggregates around western notions of harmonious selfhood" (Henke xii).

The illogic of certain event-based and restrictive definitions has been challenged in a limited fashion by recent scholarship. In particular the aforementioned DSM-III definition "outside the range of human experience" has fallen under attack by scholars

such as Allan Young, Ian Hacking and Ruth Leys,[29] and has provided an entry point for those wishing to expand on the set of events accepted as trauma, in particular, sexual and domestic violence against women and children (Herman, Brown, Henke). In her essay "Not Outside the Range," for example, Brown challenges this formulation, stating that traumata such as rape and incest, suffered primarily by women, are statistically "well within the 'range of human experience'" (101). "How could such an event which happens so often to women, so often in the life of one woman, be outside of the range of experience?" (Brown 101). The contention that she raises, however, is that the definition of "human experience" simply means "male human experience", which includes only events that affect predominantly "the lives of men of the dominant class; white, young, able-bodied, educated, middle class, Christian men" (Brown 101). The flaw in the definition's reasoning, as Brown presents it, is the precise delimiting of the definition of "human" to what is male (102).

The logic of Brown's argument neglects to address the most essential point, which is salient to the discussion in subsequent chapters; the philosophical conceit of positing a human experience that is *not* a human experience. Whether desirable or not; whatever a human being experiences belongs *a priori* to human experience. It may appear redundant to stress this point, but the longstanding opacity of the DSM-III definition and the persistence of theorists' attempts to challenge that precarious definition from *within* its own failed logic points to something which will prove essential to any understanding of traumatic crisis. Over the course of this study I will demonstrate that the

[29] See note 20 in this chapter.

masquerading of a prescriptive, limiting category of what constitutes trauma as a descriptive, inclusive one, that is, the ethical for the ontological, poses a real vulnerability underlying traumatic response. This occurs not only at a social level but as we will see, in the internal structure of subjectivity itself.

This study does not propose to undermine the extremity of experience inherent to trauma, nor the suffering of the traumatized, which is clearly significant and often totally overwhelming, nor does it argue for the abandonment of efforts such as Brown's to address inequities in the social recognition and validation of various forms of trauma. These efforts are both laudable and indispensable, but are primarily a concern of social ethics; the fields of jurisprudence and social reform. These attempts do not go far enough towards explaining the actual underlying conflict between the individual who experiences trauma in its terrible and unmediated form, and society which manages trauma economically in order to manage its shared, collective identity. Pragmatically, we find only those issues impugned socially which *appear* to threaten social identity with division. As will become clear, these are then *presented* as forces capable of disintegrating society's efforts to manage the heterogeneity of its members in such a way that loss and benefit to its members is balanced and distributed with the overall good and long term goals in mind.

Traumatic conflict arises for the most part not in overt attempts at social repression but simply in the fact that, in attending to trauma at all, society is addressing (not necessarily consciously) its own pragmatic interests, focusing only on events that point to a distinct perpetrator class and a discrete and limited class of victims. By

targeting what is clearly outside the bounds of the social norm, the marked exclusion of what is already marginal functions centripetally to emphasize the social union. Traumatic experiences such as rape, incest or child abuse (all of which affect males as well, and with even less public attention than is given to women affected by these) indicate a diffuse group of victims attacked by a class of perpetrators that are disseminated throughout society's own ranks. As Brown states above, far from being unusual, these events are shockingly widespread. They are centrifugal in their social effect, however, and their acknowledgement authentically threatens the social union with dissolution. Invoking once again Herman's observation that the same defensive processes seem to be active at a social as well an individual level, diffuse traumata are accordingly repressed at a social level as dissociative phenomena, which threaten the integrity of the social organism. The cross purpose of traumatic ruptures that are specific to the individual or, on the other hand, to society, along with the economic use of trauma will be dealt with in detail in the chapters that follow.

Attempts similar to Brown's have been made to call into line the inadequate explanations for traumatic response and the gradual proliferation of new sites of recognized trauma. Like Brown, they have questioned the plausibility of a definition that is predicated on the *infrequency* of the event. Herman states:

> Traumatic events are extraordinary, not because they occur rarely, but rather because they overwhelm the ordinary human adaptations to life. Unlike common place misfortunes, traumatic events generally involve threats to life or bodily integrity, or a close

> personal encounter with violence and death. They confront human beings with the extremities of helplessness and terror, and evoke the response of catastrophe. (*Trauma* 33)

Even here, Herman questions the limitations of the definition in favor of an expansion of the event-based model:

> In 1980, when post-traumatic stress disorder was first included in the diagnostic manual, the American Psychiatric Association described traumatic events as 'outside the range of usual human experience.' Sadly, this definition has proved to be inaccurate. Rape, battery, and other forms of sexual and domestic violence are so common a part of women's lives that they can hardly be described as outside the range of ordinary experience. And in view of the number of people killed in war over the past century, military trauma, too, must be considered a common part of human experience; only the fortunate find it unusual." (*Trauma* 33)

Here, she expands the set of acceptable claims to traumatic experience, although she does so without disabusing the event of its privileged position over the victim's own experience.

The most productive line of reasoning for extending the traditional definition of trauma to include narrative has been advanced by Caruth, and to a certain extent, Felman and Henke. Caruth directly challenges the importance of examining the specific event as definitive and proposes instead a focus on what is internal to the response itself. In her

introduction to *Explorations in Memory*, first published as two special editions of *American Imago*, she summarizes her position that the standard definition:

> […] the pathology cannot be defined either by the event itself – which may or may not be catastrophic, and may not traumatize everyone equally – nor can it be defined in terms of a *distortion* of the event […] The pathology consists, rather, solely on the *structure of its experience* or reception: the event is not assimilated or experienced fully at the time, but only belatedly, in its repeated possession of the one who experiences it (italics in original). (4)

In this approach to trauma, it is the response that is primary, while the event is only a secondary consideration: "[…] trauma is not locatable in a single violent or original event in an individual's past, but rather in the way that its very unassimilated nature – the way it was precisely not known in the first instance – returns to haunt the survivor later on" (Caruth, *Unclaimed* 4). This extremely positive shift in the direction of inquiry, essentially a restating of van der Kolk's observations on traumatic memory, is necessary if any unified discourse on the subject of trauma is to be formulated. It will also make the trauma narrative available to investigation in ways that will reveal crucial dimensions of the conflict inherent to subjectivity, and out of which that crisis arises.

1.1 Systemic Failure: An Idiopathic Approach to Trauma

Rather than terming the event catastrophic, extraordinary, comprising no less than the actual trauma itself, thereby rendering the traumatic response a secondary effect, the

limitations presented by the current definitions of trauma indicate that a systematic definition and analysis of trauma would be better served by viewing trauma in terms of what is idiosyncratic, taking as its origin the response of each individual internal to itself. Although this approach may appear to be one that would fragment the investigation of trauma still further, creating a unique traumatic form for each individual, this will not be the case. Rather, it will become possible to define trauma in terms of an organized dynamic, without having to resort to specific events or expressions of crisis as characteristic. While precipitating events or circumstances may act as stressors, these can be spoken of as representing no more than tendencies rather than as predictors. The traumatic response is predicated not on any innate quality of the experience or event, but instead, on the vulnerabilities of an underlying system which varies in its parametric composition from individual to individual, from society to society, and from one historical period to the next.

Clearly events such as war or genocide may more reliably produce traumatic response, but what is essential is that the disruption is systemic, its appearance and characteristics internally defined by the category and quality of vulnerability innate to that system rather than by the characteristics of the stressor. This is not unlike the way in which carcinogens may stress the somatic system, which itself determines the way, shape and form of its own breakdown based on its own particular susceptibilities.

An approach that begins with the system and its vulnerabilities will be able to establish a unified and dynamic process by which seemingly disparate models of traumatic experience may be produced, rather than establishing each individual model as

absolute. Additionally, a systemic approach will make it possible to begin bringing together a number of disparate approaches, beginning here with Freud and Janet, but approaches that are rooted as well in the long term philosophical opposition of sensation and cognitive reflection, in order to demonstrate how these various theories closely interact, approaching the same problem from valid but distinct viewpoints. I will begin here by addressing the systemic underpinnings of identity and its connection to language.

1.1.1. The Primacy of the Word

An approach to trauma that takes as its vantage point a systemic disruption of identity requires that a system be identified that can adequately explain the symptoms of individual or collective traumatic response. A starting point for such a theoretical system can be found in the semiotic framework advanced primarily by Jacques Lacan (1901-1981) and the French psychoanalytic movement.[30] Lacan's approach to psychoanalytic theory succeeds in expanding Freud's observations on the human psyche to include post-Freudian advances in the field of linguistics, observing that the concepts developed by Freud "take on their full meaning only when oriented in a field of language, only when ordered in relation to the function of speech" (Lacan, *Écrits* 39). Critical to a grasp of Lacan's psychoanalytic interpretation is an understanding, then, of the ways in which identity is formed, defined and delimited by language. Since the role of language in identity serves as the origin of this study's descriptive, system-internal approach, it is

[30] A standard historical account of the French psychoanalytic movement can be found in: Elizabeth Roudinesco, *Jacques Lacan & Co.: A History of Psychoanalysis in France, 1925-1985* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990). See also: Elizabeth Roudinesco, *Jaques Lacan*, trans. Barbara Bray (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997).

indispensable to begin by laying out in some detail not only Lacan's "linguistic Freudianism," but also certain central philosophical approaches to language and identity.

The notion of language as the ultimate foundation of identity refers first and foremost back to Kant's so-called "Copernican Revolution," which states that the representation makes the object possible, rather than the object the representation.[31] Kant (1724-1804) argues that the individual cannot escape cognition in order to reach a direct knowledge of the object, unmediated by language. Indeed, as Kant argues:

> To determine *a priori* the connexion of the feeling of pleasure or displeasure as an effect, with some representation or other (sensation or concept) as its cause, is utterly impossible; for that would be a causal relation which, (with objects of experience,) is always one that can only be cognized *a posteriori* and with the help of experience.[32]

Judgment, according to Kant, "does not deal with any *concept* of the nature or of the internal or external possibility, by this or that cause, of the object, but merely with the relative bearing of the representative powers so far as they are determined by a representation" (*Judgment* 62). This notion that judgment, or active cognition, does not come to bear upon the object as external entity, but upon the perception of the object initiates a move away from the belief that meaning is correlate with an external, objective reality.

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[31] Thomas Mautner, ed., *The Penguin Dictionary of Philosophy*, rev. ed. (New York: Penguin Books, 1997) 291.
[32] Immanuel Kant, *The Critique of Judgment*, trans. James Creed Meredith (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1952) 63.

Since this thesis entered into philosophical discourse, the role of such knowledge in shaping identity, in particular as it is language-based, has played an increasingly critical role. Our inability to escape the representation renders the *thing in itself* (*Ding in sich*) unattainable, which in turn renders truth internal to representations: "Now a thing in itself cannot be known through mere relations; and we may therefore conclude that since outer sense gives us nothing but mere relations, this sense can contain in its representation only the relation of an object to the subject, and not the inner properties of the object in itself."[33] With shift in focus towards the role of the subject in the formation of objective identity, subsequent metaphysical and philosophical inquiry has shifted towards the systemic reification of the "manifold of sensation" into sense, particularly as language, a process which Kant calls *synthesis*: "By *synthesis,* in the most general sense, I understand the act of putting different representations together, and of grasping what is manifold in them in one [act of] knowledge" (*Reason* 111). The subject, Kant contends, necessarily views the world and its sense in terms of its spatial and temporal dimensions (*Reason* 111). "Space and time contain a manifold of pure *a priori* intuition, but at the same time are conditions of the receptivity of our mind – conditions under which alone it can receive representations of objects, and which therefore must also always affect the concept of these objects" (*Reason* 111), that is, knowledge will always appear to be grounded in a particular time and space.

In formulating his notion of the *Ding in sich* as being unattainable by human cognition, Kant drew upon what was already a long-standing tradition in philosophical

[33] Immanuel Kant, *The Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. Norman Kemp Smith (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1929) 87.

and metaphysical inquiry that attempted to account for the differences between *a priori* and *a posteriori* knowledge in relation to the subject, most notably in the work of Leibniz and Locke. This tradition demonstrates more clearly than Kant's own thesis the dependence of such synthetic knowledge on the signs and signifiers representing it. Leibniz (1646-1716) further developed an already existent theory of the *characteristica universalis*, "a general theory and a system of signs which comprehends both logic and grammar as parts."[34]

Attempting to establish a combinatorial system of simple concepts linked in a one-to-one relationship with signs, Leibniz arrived at his thesis of the monad, which he defined as spiritual substances that cannot be divided into parts and act wholly independently.[35] The monad can be understood, then, as irreducible identity. The primary definition of a monad "is that of a self, capable of awareness" (Mautner 310). The unity of the monad is contrasted against the division in the system of signs (Adams 222). Leibniz does not dissociate the sign/concept from the underlying physical entity, the "organic body" (Adams 286), and therefore his combinatorial system is a system of "real" and fixed objects. Nevertheless, the theory of the monad addresses the dyadic notion of an indestructible and indivisible identity in concourse with the dynamic force of changing identity, as these are expressed in signs.

John Locke (1632-1704), whose work on epistemology was contemporaneous with that of Leibniz, goes further towards developing a theoretical approach to the

[34] Mautner 310. For an in-depth examination of Leibniz's metaphysics, see also: Robert Merrihew Adams, *Leibniz: Determinist, Theist, Idealist* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994) 200-202.
[35] Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, *The Monadology and Other Philosophical Essays*, trans. Robert Latta (London: Oxford University Press, 1951) 217.

differential functions and intrinsic division between signs and identity. This will play a critical role in explaining the division intrinsic to identity that I am proposing here. Locke claims that language is not innate (*a priori*) as previously believed, but instead must be acquired (*a posteriori*), with the mind originating as a *tabula rasa*.[36] Ideas, Locke argued, are derived from experience, both of internal reflection and external sensation (Locke 291-292). Using linguistic operators "such as comparing, combining and abstracting" (Locke 157-159), the individual is able to arrive at new ideas that differ from either sensation or reflection (Locke 157-159). In the nature of things, the *real essence* of an entity is comprised of the "inner constitution" of that entity (Locke 417). By contrast, the *nominal essence*, which is comprised of our ideas, does not correspond precisely with the real essence (Locke 417). Ultimately, Locke seeks to apply a "mitigated skepticism" in order to establish a *via media* between the Cartesian and scholastic "over confidence in the power of human reason," which unduly privileges cognition, and the contrasting belief that we can know nothing, held by proponents of skepticism such as Hume (Mautner 321). Here again, a space is opened up between sign and experience, a gap which will be dealt with theoretically and in great length in the twentieth century.

Deeply influenced by Leibniz and Locke, Kant's subsequent declaration that the thing in itself exists beyond the limited reach of cognition moves the underlying entity into the background. Instead, the representation of the object, as the material of language and cognition, begins to take center stage in philosophical inquiry. As a result, with the advent of modern linguistic theory, Kant's notion that direct experience of the thing in

[36] John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, ed. Peter H. Nidditch (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975) 104.

itself cannot be accessed via the representation began to be framed in terms of the foregrounding of the signifier; that is, the linguistic representation of the underlying signified.[37] The formation of meaning through language and in particular through the interrelation of signifiers has become a leading idea in modern linguistics since the work of de Saussure (1857-1913).

The focus on the interrelations between signifiers, which establishes the foundation of structuralist theory, has shifted the focus of theoretical inquiry in many fields towards an inquiry into the role of the social compact in determining the value of the signifier. Ferdinand de Saussure invokes the reliance of language on this compact in his explanation of the arbitrary nature of the sign: "The link between signal and signification is arbitrary. Since we are treating a sign as the combination in which a signal is associated with a signification, we can express this more simply as: *the linguistic sign is arbitrary*" (67). For my present purposes, de Saussure's assertion that signs form their own instances of meaning is critical. Despite the fact that the signifier is arbitrary, however, that signifier cannot be altered by the individual in isolation without the sanction of the social milieu in which he exits and communicates: "For any means of expression accepted in a society rests in principle upon a collective habit or on convention which comes to the same thing" (Saussure 68). The individual user of the sign is thus also placed under pressure by this gap.

[37] The signifier is defined by de Saussure as the sound image that references an object, while the signified was the referent object itself. Ferdinand de Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics*, ed. Charles Bally and Albert Reidlinger, trans. Wade Baskin (New York: Philosophical Library, 1959) 67. Emile Benveniste later amended this definition to recognize the fact that the referent is not an object, but rather the idea of the object. Emile Benveniste, "The Nature of the Linguistic Sign," *Critical Theory Since 1965*, ed. Hazard Adams and Leroy Searle (Tallahassee: Florida State University Press, 1986) 725-728.

Several dimensions of the gaps and interrelations between meaning, signifier, user, and social sphere have emerged as an independent theoretical discussion. A contemporary of de Saussure, Gottlob Frege (1848-1925), examined the logical interrelation of signifiers as well as of separate dimensions of meaning within a single instance of signification. Frege examines the signifier in terms of its relation to its signified, and his linguistic theory examines the internal organization of the signifier. Like de Saussure, Frege contended that all relations exist between signifiers alone, not their underlying objects.[38] The canonical example is that of the Morning Star versus the Evening Star, with which Frege illustrates that signification is, in itself, already an act of interpretation (625). The terms 'Morning Star' and 'Evening Star' both reference the planet 'Venus,' but all three terms are fixed temporally and spatially to a specific instance of the object in question and are referentially opaque. Despite the fact that the underlying entity is agreed to be the same, each presentation contains new knowledge of the object, not the sum of all knowledge regarding the entity (Frege 625). It is apparent, then, that signification is dependent upon the group's consensus as to the *use* of an object, not just its identity.

Drawing on but also revising Kant's refutation of the possibility for the individual to claim *a priori* knowledge, Frege divides the differential functions of signification into three separate instances: *meaning* (Bedeutung), *sense* (Sinn), and *idea* (Idee) (Frege 626).

[38] Gottlob Frege, "On Sense and Meaning," *Critical Theory Since 1965*, ed. Hazard Adams and Leroy Searle (Tallahassee: Florida State University Press, 1986) 625.

What Frege refers to as *meaning*,[39] that is, the true, underlying entity referenced by the signifier cannot be established in the case of an object since we have no unmediated experience of it (626). What the signifier immediately references is the *use* of the object, its *sense*, which, like *meaning*, is also not of direct experience. It is, rather, the product of deductive reasoning in concourse with other individuals in our social milieu (Frege 626). *Sense* is an approximation of meaning pieced together by observing the language use of others and taking into account their response to our own. It thereby follows that sense can no more be held by the individual than meaning, but instead, the individual must attempt to formulate an approximation of sense, which is in a constant state of reanalysis and redefinition. Ultimately, the only unmediated experience of the object is the *idea*, that is, the cognitive object held in one's own idiolect, which may be more or less correlate to *sense*, but never be precisely identical (Frege 626).

Frege's distinction between *meaning*, *sense* and *idea*, brings us to a twofold rendering of Kant's solipsist "conditioned experience," which states that we have no substantive *a priori* knowledge of the objects with which we interact, but only a subjective knowledge based on presuppositions of individual and collective experience (Mautner 291). The doubling of this proposition occurs in the fact that, between the solipsist rendering of the object as idea and the unattainable thing in itself (meaning), a third element intervenes that is neither sovereign by virtue of its assertion of ontological legitimacy, nor by virtue of its being solely possessed by the personal experience that

[39] Meaning refers to the logical condition under which a statement of equality could be asserted; Morning Star and Evening Star reference the same object. Sinn, on the other hand, refers to the representation in social use.

contains it. This third facet of meaning arises instead in social concourse within a template that is shaped by shared experience. It is in this mediation, *sense*, that communication is enabled, and here that social constraint is placed on the foundation both of the object and of the subject. The distinctions drawn by Frege regarding the levels of meaning within the discrete "object" will prove to be of critical importance to the foundation of subjectivity and traumatic vulnerability. Likewise, they serve as an entry point into the work of Jacques Lacan, who explicitly extends these dimensions of meaning and signification for the discrete entity to the systemic interrelations of instances within fields of *meaning*, *sense*, and *idea*. By so doing, he initiates a semiotic approach to the function of identity.

1.1.2 Structuralism and the Landmarks of Linguistic of Identity

At the foundation of Lacan's psychoanalytic theory is the understanding that the subject, no less than the object, is founded in the field of language and the function of speech (Lacan, *Écrits* 36). Lacan rewrites Freudianism within the topos of Saussurean semiotics in order to explain the emergence of the subject's identity, drawing on the theoretical work of linguists such as de Saussure, Frege, Benveniste, and Jakobson.[40] In doing so, he establishes what he terms a topography of the subject made up of *the symbolic*, *the imaginary*, and *the real*, which, as will become evident, correlate in certain

[40] Emile Benveniste was a linguist who explored the relationship between language and thought. Roman Jakobson was active in the fields of literary studies, linguistics, psychoanalysis, and semiotics. See Roman Jakobson, *On Language*, ed. Linda R. Waugh and Monique Monville-Burston (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1990). Roman Jakobson, "The Metaphoric and Metonymic Poles," *Critical Theory Since Plato*, ed. Hazard Adams (Fort Worth, TX: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich College Publishers, 1992) 1041-1044.

critical ways with Frege's distinctions of *sense*, *idea*, and *meaning*. Lacan asserts a relation between identity, meaning, syntax, and the social unit, that systematically produces different articulations of individual subjectivity from within that underlying identity in relation to the group.

The symbolic order, as Lacan defines the order of language constituted by the signs and their interrelations,[41] dominated Lacan's theoretical position until late in his work, and therefore it continues to dominate in theoretical discourse today. The domain of both rational thought (the Cartesian *cogito*) and social communication, the symbolic order is neither an iconography nor abstract symbolism: rather it encompasses the sum of all signifiers and, more importantly, the relations and social practices by which they are mutually defined.[42] The symbolic order comprises what we refer to as "reality" in common discourse (Lacan, *Écrits* 65), but which will not constitute the sole order of the 'real' as Lacan defines it.

In speaking of the primacy of the signifier, we are actually speaking of the primacy of a symbolic order. Here, we must bear in mind that structuralism conceives of language as a system of differential elements that possess no meaning in and of themselves, but that instead derive their meaning in relation to one another (Saussure 66). While the signifier is fully arbitrary, the signifier's very arbitrariness renders it to a large extent immutable, since it belongs to a closed and homeostatic system (Benveniste 727).

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[41] Jaqueline Rose, Introduction, *Feminine Sexuality: Jacques Lacan and the Ecole Freudienne*, by Jacques Lacan, ed. Juliet Mitchell and Jaqueline Rose (New York: Pantheon Books, 1982) 31. In the interest of conciseness and brevity I will draw on both Jaqueline Rose and Juliet Mitchell in my treatment of Lacan, simply because their introductory material provides a clearer presentation of his key theoretical points than Lacan's own texts.

[42] Lacan, *Écrits* 125. See also de Saussure 66.

Additionally, the fact that language is the very material of cognitive thought renders it by in large immune to rational challenge (Benveniste 727). Contributing to the relatively conservative pace of change in the sign's meaning is the interdependence of signifiers; signs derive meaning in minimal pairs, one instance defined in its relation to a second (synchronic), one moment in time in relation to the preceding moment in memory and the expectation of the moment to come (diachronic). The elements of the symbolic order are posited thetically, however, meaning that the individual perceives them to have arisen wholly independently, rather than in relation to other elements in the system.[43] As a result, the relational interdependence of the elements in the symbolic order is obscured from the individual's view.

In Lacan's theoretical approach to identity, the relational organization of the symbolic order makes it a holistic structure, and therefore, by necessity, it is also evaluative, serial, dualistic and causal. It is, in consequence, also prescriptive. It comprises an ethical order in the Hegelian sense of an effort to bridge the gap between the objective and the subjective. Rather than a prescriptive moral ethics, in other words, the ethics of the symbolic order defines and prescribes the relation of elements within that order. The fact that this ethics is shared within the social order means that alterations to the symbolic order can only be brought about through gradual social acceptance. If acceptance fails, a variant advanced by the individual will be rejected socially as an anomaly, as a logic violation or as a violation of socially shared values. Identity arising

[43] Julia Kristeva notes: "There is no sign that is not thetic, and every sign is already the germ of a 'sentence,' attributing a signifier to an object through a 'copula' that will function as a signified. Julia Kristeva, *Revolution in Poetic Language*, trans. Margaret Waller (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984) 44.

within the topography of language thereby arises within a tension between the private and public spheres. The consensus is culturally and socially specific, mediated via language, and this has permitted Lacan's linguistic Freudianism to retain what is efficacious in psychoanalytic theory, while at the same time avoiding the fallacy of cultural monadism.[44] Lacan's very approach provides an iteration of the balance that must be struck between individual identity and moral values.

What has developed out of Lacan's efforts to dynamically wed psychological and semiotic theories is a system that focuses on the interrelation of elements within subjectivity rather than on their specifics. Culturally mediated constraints in the symbolic order are able to check endless variation of subjective identity, since violations of the available symbolic order must either be accommodated in another form or must bring about an alteration of that order if they are not to find themselves discredited or even silenced (Saussure 21-22). Nevertheless, there are aspects of subjective identity that successfully challenge the symbolic order, arising out of an underlying domain available only to the individual, where the "flow of experience" and the stases of drives and sensations (Rose 30) establish an epistemic identity. This flow of experience is then articulated in the individual's privately held apprehension of language and meaning – the idiolect. In this way, identity comes into existence in the interplay between socially signified structures and individual experience, the individually signified structures of language, and the social use and acceptance of those structures.

[44] It does this by accommodating what Lacan terms the *c-factor*; that is, the role of culture on the formation of the subject and his symbolic order Lacan *Écrits*, 37.

Lacan's symbolic order represents the order of language in which discrete elements are established through the arbitrary and divisive process of signification (Rose 31). Yet because of signification's divisive nature, language and identity are formed in "a topological unity of gaps in play."[45] These gaps, which arise naturally and necessarily through the arbitrary process of signification (Lacan, *Four* 21) cause a false fragmentation of the subject and lead both to the shifting of identity and to an individual experience of discontinuity "in which something is manifested as a vacillation" (Lacan, *Four* 25).

Adhering closely to the work and terminology of Freud, while simultaneously expanding these to include linguistic theories of signification, Lacan described the unconscious as the site of latent signification, comprised of that which is silenced within the gaps formed by the current symbolic order (Lacan, *Four* 182). It contains, in other words, "the entire structure of language" (Lacan, *Écrits* 147), not just that which can be expressed in any single contemporaneous manifestation of language, but all potential expression as well. The subject has internalized the entire structure of the symbolic order as a part of identity. Because of the subject's need to repeat identity (*wiederholen*, which is to say, to retrieve that identity), it responds to these gaps, the unconscious, by striving towards a resolution of division (Rose 33). There exists, in other words, some awareness in the individual that the structures of signification, meaning, and identity comprise a false reduction.

[45] Jacques Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-analysis*, ed. Jacques-Alain Miller, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Norton, 1978) 181.

In response to this tendency to return to what has been lost, Lacan advances a linguistic interpretation of Freud's notion of the drive, which he defines as the subject's efforts to reach what is excluded or divided by language (Rose 34). In this, Lacan refutes the widespread notion that the drives are instinct and thereby a product of biology and maturation (Rose 34). Instead, the unconscious comprises *absence*, rather than what is "non-conscious" or "more or less conscious" (Lacan, *Four* 24), and that absence is simply that which consciousness cannot possess because it is not *currently* defined within language. In other words, in response to the divisive functioning of language, the subject establishes, as ego, the myth of its own cohesion (Rose 30). That cohesion, the image of self or "capturing image," is challenged by the unconscious as awareness arises, rupturing the ego (Rose 38). From Lacan's perspective, the identity that comprises the ego and its ruptures is more broadly related to the symbolic order, forming an independent region, *the imaginary*.

For Lacan, the imaginary is the order of the ego and its identifications and is the site of those instances of signification and expression that belong to the subject's own idiolect (Rose 31-32). [46] The imaginary constitutes a part of reality for the individual subject, although Lacan claims that this reality is frequently destined to remain nothing more than a "phantasm" for the subject, since thought and discourse are constrained by the limitations of the symbolic order (Rose 31-32). The imaginary holds the specious image of the subject (the *imago*) through which the myth of subjective cohesion is

[46] The Lacanian 'real' is not the equivalent of 'reality' but rather, "that which always returns to the same place", the "umbilical cord of the symbolic order." Lacan, *Four* 280. In other words, the 'real' contains those foreclosed elements that remain unavailable to rational thought, but to which all articulations of signification return because founded in aspects such as the physical or organic.

created (Rose 30). By identification with the imago, the image of self that arises in the imaginary, the individual is able to construct an identity which appears cohesive while, at the same time, is captured in its own image and subject to challenge by latent signification in the unconscious (Rose 30). This cohesion is, however, based on the signifying practices of the social order.

This shift towards the semiotic also defines truth and ethics differently than in the theoretical approaches that preceded Lacan, who contends that the unconscious is pre-ontological, neither being nor non-being, but simply that which has not yet been realized.[47] In this way, he attempts to withdraw from a debate over the ontological validity of the subject's truth, choosing instead to define identity based on the interrelation of differential organizational structures. Lacan describes not only the conscious but also the unconscious as structured by language; the unconscious contains "the whole structure of language" (*Écrits* 147). With this, Lacan does not mean that the divisions of language that emerge as a part of that subject's identity are natural and therefore motivated, but rather, suggests that the processes of the subject's unconscious operate within language as the impetus to new signification. The notion that the unconscious operates within language raises certain difficult questions that I will address in the following chapter.

Although Lacan refutes the notion that identity is predetermined, he nonetheless also rejects any notion that that there exists an underlying *one*, that is, a totality of identity that underlies the discontinuity brought about by language. "Is the *one* anterior to

[47] Jacques Lacan, *The Psychoses*, trans. Russell Grigg (New York: W.W. Norton, 1993) 29-30.

discontinuity? I do not think so, and everything that I have taught in recent years has tended to exclude this need for a closed *one* – a mirage to which is attached the reference to the enveloping psyche, a sort of double of the organism in which this false unity is thought to reside" (*Psychoses* 26). In refuting the existence of an underlying unity, that which Lacan calls the unconscious is therefore perhaps better termed the process by which identity, through the mutability of language, is altered. That identity of the subject, in turn, has been defined as the interplay of forces of signification, rather than as an organic self waiting to emerge. Although there are specific notions in Lacan's model of subjectivity that need to be reexamined and questioned, his semiotic approach will ultimately have enormous implications for the study of trauma.

1.2. Linguistic Freudianism

Critical to any semiotic approach to identity and to trauma are the intrinsic differences between the subject and objects that share an environment: how they come into being, and the nature of their participation in signification and discourse. The object that emerges as significant to a subject's identity is instituted on the basis of removed observation from a locus wholly outside of the objective position, which is to say deductively, using logic and comparison. Subjective identity, on the other hand, is inductive, originating with experience from within the locus of subjectivity itself, which is inescapable, no matter what the symbolic order attempts to dictate as authentic experience. This fundamental difference generates a critical underlying conflict upon which traumatic vulnerability is founded, and therefore the origin and functioning of

each, inductive subjectivity and deductive objectivity, must be established before the present discussion progresses on to a more immediate definition of trauma and its treatment.

Lacan divides the emergence of language, and hence the individual's linguistic identity, into discrete phases that do not repudiate Freudian psychoanalysis, but instead, reiterate it, emphasizing Freud's own attention to the role of language. Lacan stated that he intended for his theory to continue Freud's work which, because of most therapeutic practitioners' failure to completely understand the psychoanalytic model, came to be canonized as inflexibly as a liturgy (*Écrits* 119). Regrettably, Lacan's initial use of classic Freudian terminology has left his own work vulnerable to conflation with the same falsifications of Freud's theory that Lacan was attempting to challenge, rendering terms misleading and difficult to understand. (Lacan eventually distanced himself from his earlier, Freudian-based terms in order to overcome their inherent limitations). In addition, as Juliet Mitchell[48] explains, Lacan himself utilizes a style that is "preposterously difficult," purportedly in order to avoid "the popularization and secularization as it has occurred most notably in North America" (4). For this reason, a description of terms follows, which is perhaps redundant for some readers, but which is nonetheless essential.

1.2.1 The Separation of the Subject from Its Environment

[48] Juliet Mitchell, "Introduction," *Feminine Sexuality: Jacques Lacan and the École Freudienne*, by Jacques Lacan, ed. Juliet Mitchell and Jaqueline Rose (New York: Pantheon Books, 1982) 1-26.

As previously noted, Lacan's approach to the emergence of identity presumes that we, as human beings, are born into this world prematurely, without the ability to govern our bodies, affect our environment or communicate our needs (Rose 30). Lacking language, we cannot categorize and manipulate the world discursively. Instead, the initial stage of our existence is characterized by an undifferentiated consciousness made up not of discrete elements and structures, but forming a continuum. Somehow, out of this flow of energies, drives and experience, structured language has to emerge, and with it, the individual's human identity. The first condition that is necessary for the structuring of language to occur is the individual's realization that she is in the world, not the world itself, and that, since separate, she can act upon other entities found therein.

Lacan places this moment of realization in the mirror stage,[49] when the child becomes conscious that she has volitional control over her own body – the seminal beginnings of language. This stage is named for the mirroring function of the child's environment, during which she learns to see in the response of others that her actions are seen and interpreted as belonging to him (Rose 30). Lacan identifies this external image of self-as-object in the world as comprising the *subject in language*, for which he draws on the work of Benveniste (Rose 31) among others. Benveniste developed the linguistic notion of the *shifter*: a term or designation that references neither a specific concept nor a certain individual, but instead "refers to the individual act of discourse in which it is pronounced, and by this, designates the speaker" at a particular place and time.[50]

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[49] Lacan, *Écrits* 103. The mirror stage builds on Freud's initial analysis of the "fort-da" game by which the child realises that objects are not constant, but may appear and then disappear (Lacan, *Four* 62).
[50] Emile Benveniste, "Subjectivity in Language," *Critical Theory Since 1965*, ed. Hazard Adams and Leroy Searle (Tallahassee: Florida State University Press, 1986) 730.

The personal pronouns provide the most representative example of the shifter's function. A pronoun acquires its meaning referentially rather than in the absolute identify of a given entity, referencing the speaker, listener and agents within the context of the utterance itself.[51] The 'I' that speaks, in other words, represents a particular individual only within the context and at the moment of speaking. Likewise the 'you' being addressed obtains its meaning directly from the context in which it was spoken. Uttered under different temporal or spatial circumstances, or by another individual, the 'I' references a wholly separate subject. The personal pronoun as shifter marks the increasing control exerted by the social compact upon the individual's identity. Moving beyond the syntactic level of the pronoun, Lacan's *subject in language* extends the notion of a shifter to include subjectivity itself. The subject, then, as we commonly understand it, is in Lacan's terms a *subject in process* (as well as *on trial)* – the *sujet en process*. In a symbolized expression, the subject is also symbolized, and is therefore subject to the same trial and negotiation of meaning that any other symbolized term undergoes.

Out of her new awareness and her emerging ability to use pronouns in a socially-viable way, the child establishes herself as an image in her environment and adapts her image to the idiom of that culturally, socially and historically specified moment. This renders the subject of language, which Lacan calls the ego, "the least stable entity in language, since its meaning is purely a function of the moment of utterance" (Rose 30). Rooted in gesture and mimicry, the child's mimetic responses cannot yet be termed

[51] The term 'shifter' was coined by Otto Jespersen, and is a part of a lengthy theoretical discourse. Otto Jespersen, *Language: Its Nature, Development, and Origin* (New York: H. Holt, 1922) 123. Alessandro Duranti defines shifters as a particular class of indices, possessing "the property that linguistic signs like *I, you, here, now, yesterday* and tense forms have to "shift" their meaning from one context to the next." Alessandro Duranti, *Linguistic Anthropology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997) 208.

language, but it is analogous to the child's discovery of her *capacity* for language. In the same instance, however, the organism becomes captured in this alienating image it has found and identified in the world as self (Rose 30), beginning the process of thetic positing and the assumption that signifier and signified together represent a natural and motivated entity. In Lacan's terms, the individual's *imago* is founded in an internal imaginary, an artificial rendering of identity that constitutes the social *sense* of the subject as it has been apprehended by the individual. Through this alienating self-identification with the image in the world, Lacan explains, the *ego* is created as a reduced and falsifying identity that strives to maintain an illusion of its own completeness and the coherence of its actions and desires (Rose 30). Using rationalization and false statements about itself and its motivations, this falsifying ego maintains the illusion of coherence within the logical constraints of the symbolic and conceals what Lacan regarded as the body's fragmentation into stases (Rose 30).

At this early point in her psychological development, the child still posits herself in a symbiotic relationship with her environment and her primary caretaker, whom Lacan refers to as the mother (Rose 38). The division of the child from this symbiotic fantasy requires a third element outside of the mother-child pairing in order to break the symbiotic bond between the two. This third "paternal" element, which Lacan terms the phallus, is the element that breaks that bond. If one suppresses the natural instinct to conjure the penis as its referent, Lacan's phallus can be understood as simply that which the mother desires that the child does not possess and cannot provide in order to win her undivided attentions. Rose describes the interaction of these three elements:

> The duality of the relation between mother and child must be broken, […]. In Lacan's account, the phallus stands for that moment of rupture. It refers mother and child to the dimension of the symbolic which is figured by the father's place. The mother is taken to desire the phallus not because she contains it (Klein), but precisely because she does not. The phallus therefore belongs somewhere else; it breaks the two term relation and initiates the order of exchange. (38)

Stated more simply, the phallus is that object outside of both the mother and the child and to which the mother responds, establishing an inter-subjective relationship of at least three entities – the mother, the child, and the Other as abstract entity. The emerging evidence of this relationship demonstrates to the child that action and interaction do occur without the child's direct, omnipotent involvement. There are now at least three autonomous entities in the world.

Rather than expressing an oedipal wish to actually sleep with the mother, the child's desire first to become the phallus (to *be* the object of the mother's desire), then to possess it (to control that object) corresponds simply to the gradual realization that the mother does not respond in perfect accord with the child's needs and desires. She behaves independently, motivated by a relation outside of that which the child shares with her. With this awareness that there is a third and unknown element in the picture, the child discovers that she *needs* language if she is to redirect the mother's attentions back to herself. The child is herewith posited as a linguistic entity. Thus Lacan rewrites

Freud's image of psychological development as a model for psycholinguistics or psychosocial symbolic development. In his later work, Lacan moves away from these more traditional Freudian images in order to emphasize the linguistic aspects of this process, rather than the social, in particular in his work on the *simulacrum*.

The phallus (and later, the simulacrum) can also be termed the *master signifier* around which the symbolic order reifies,[52] since it does not correspond with a particular entity, but rather with those entities beyond the child which therefore exclude her and compete with her earlier sense of omnipotence. The phallus becomes the first symbol in the symbolic order, and it catalyses the process by which the child will begin to break up and classify the world into elements for linguistic manipulation, in accordance with the patterns manifested in the symbolic order and its gaps. Lacan retains the eroticized characteristic of Freud's terminology because it invokes the desire for a return to symbiotic unity with that which language has declared to be separate.

The individual subject's desire to remerge into a symbiotic unity and thereby relinquish both subjective independence and the dissociative process of signification falls under Lacan's concept of *jouissance*, a French word that glosses to multiple meanings in English: pleasure, death and orgasm (Rose 34). Lacan associates this with Freud's death drive, and in so doing redefines that drive as the organism's drive not to its own destruction, but rather its drive to return to an idealized and eroticized unity that preceded the emergence of consciousness. A return to a pre-linguistic, epistemic unity, however,

[52] Mitchell 40-42. This offers a solution to a problem that Structuralism doesn't adequately address, namely, that a system requires an initializing element in relation to which other elements may form. This is similar to the concept of "seeding" in random number generators, in which some variable such as the date or time must be inserted in order to begin and "randomize" the production of values. The arbitrary nature of these, then, is the transparency of the initial element.

would constitute the destruction of language and linguistic identity (Rose 35) and consequently, would mean the death of cognitive identity. This, in turn, would therefore lead to the individual's expulsion from social interaction – the death of the individual as a social subject.

1.2.2 Emergence of a Subject that Speaks

Lacan's work highlights the tension between the individual and the social entity. The moment in which the individual discovers that she has an active role in communication and can modify her behavior and presentation in the world also marks her entry into the social order and a never-ending effort to restore the social accord found in the illusion of perfect symbiosis promised in the experience of the mother. While the subject's epistemic project is a return to ontological unity with her environment and the seamless flow of experience, this is incommensurate with the ethical project of evaluating and choosing those gestures and signs which will be the most efficacious representation of subjectivity in language, and which can simultaneously effect the broadest range of control as a substitute for the lost security of symbiosis. The subject is thus caught between individual experience, and the power of the social compact to dictate the terms in which experience may be expressed.

The "seduction" carried out by the child during the mirror stage marks the emergence of language use; gesticulation and mimicry at first, but still, a seminal effort to produce the ideal representation of discursive subjectivity in order to restore power to the child in an environment, which has been recognized to be capricious. These two

competing objectives, the epistemic and the ethical, promise both conflict and accord. Both belong to the individual, and establish an inherent conflict of needs and articulations of self that will prove to be at times preclusive of one another. Stated more simply, the realization that she is separate from her environment deprives the child of her protective sense of omnipotence. At the same moment, it also provides her with the necessary means for manipulating that environment and reclaiming some power through the ability to signify and create discourse. From this point on during her psychological development, the child begins to acquire, through careful deductive observation of the social uses of language, the repertoire of signs with which she will balance the rendering of her identity in the domain of the signifier between that which will speak authentically for personal experience, and that which will correlate with an ideal subjectivity in social interaction. If she goes too far, however, she will find herself invested in a socially leased identity at the cost of her subjective experience.

Lacan is not alone in his rewriting of Freud's drives into a play of sound signification. When we begin to account for the "flow of experience" together with the constraints of shared and socially formed delimitations of meaning, it becomes apparent that disparate psychological approaches to identity and trauma may be regarded as commensurate in that they address different aspects of a conflict between self and society. While the eroticisation of drives in Freud's psychoanalytic theory depicts the desire to remerge with what is lost in order to recapture the mother/child symbiosis through sexual union, Bertrand Russell and Karl Adler's theories of power address the

subject's attempt to gain mastery from within the condition of separateness.[53] Likewise, Freud's ethical approach to trauma as the repression of what is socially unacceptable differs from Janet's thesis of a traumatic disruption to the cognitive schemata only in as far as Freud addresses the disruption from *within* the outrage of the evaluative symbolic order. In examining cognitive schemata, Janet, by contrast, provides an epistemic approach that is external to the field of symbolized meaning.

The healthy individual, Lacan reasons, eventually renounces the sustained attempt to become the "phallus" (i.e. object of the mother's desire), the perfect complement to the mother, which is fantasized to be capable of binding her through mutual desire to remain in symbiosis with her child. The child, instead, substitutes for that union the paternal metaphor (i.e. language) not as a single master signifier, but as a system of "situational phalli" capable of forging bonds even as they unavoidably sever others. The term 'parental metaphor' is given a very specific meaning and function in Lacan's theoretical framework, acting "as a reference to the act of substitution (substitution is the very law of metaphoric operation), whereby the prohibition of the father takes up the place originally figured by the absence of the mother" (Rose 38-39). The rules of prohibition and censure create and "ethical" account of that which has been excluded from language. Lacan, in other words, claims that the healthy individual ceases to struggle to return to the undifferentiated state prior to the discovery of language, and accepts the symbolic order as "reality."

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[53] See Bertrand Russell, *Power: A New Social Analysis* (New York: Routledge, 2004). For Adler, see Harold Mosak and Michael Maniacci, *A Primer of Adlerian Psychology: The Analytic-Behavioral-Cognitive Psychology of Alfred Adler* (Philadelphia: Brunner/Mazel, 1999).

This definition of the healthy individual allows a redefinition of *trauma* as well. This moment in the individual's development when she purportedly takes up residence in the symbolic order is referred to as *castration*, redefined in Lacan's theory as phallus, rather than the (Freudian) penis. "Castration means first of all this – that the child's desire for the mother does not refer *to* her but *beyond* her, to an object, the phallus, whose status is imaginary (the object presupposed to satisfy her desire) and then symbolic (recognition that desire cannot be satisfied)" (Rose 38). In Lacan's theoretical model, castration represents the inception of a law that prohibits the individual from founding the imaginary object which would be capable of returning the child to the pre-linguistic state of unity. In more immediate terms, the individual's participation in the symbolic order (organized around phallic power) prohibits the dissolution of linguistic boundaries through "transgressive" language – transgression is by definition in heterogeneous *experience* (and as Kristeva will add, in the semiotic, the ability to generate new signs), not in socially established language. With the advent of prohibition and the marking of linguistic boundaries that threaten the transgressor with expulsion from the symbolic order, we find the beginning of contiguous loss of identity where it falls on the fault lines of language and the ethical's discontinuity and reductive structure. Irrevocably severed as well is the experiencing, epistemic subject from the discursive and ethical public identity, at which point subjectivity continues its development straddling a schism. This will be examined in detail below.

1.3 Divided Subjectivity in Crisis: Experience into Narrative

Having looked at the basic underlying structure of identity as it is constructed in, and through language, it is possible to return here to a discussion of trauma. In the traditional investigation of trauma, two descriptive characteristics consistently come to the fore as ubiquitous: the division of the trauma survivor's identity, and her inability to speak of the trauma. A great deal has been written about the subjective experience of the traumatic response, both from the experiencing point of view of the survivors themselves and from the externally constructed view of theorists, researchers and mental health professionals, that indicates the centrality of these two characterizing features. In addition, it has been consistently observed that the traumatized individual's system of experience is disrupted by dialectic oppositions. The way in which experience is organized in cognition gives rise to attitudes, perceptions and responses that appear as though they should preclude one another, and that, since unmerged, are manifested as a continually shifting response profile. Herman writes that: "in the aftermath of an intense experience of overwhelming danger, the two contradictory responses of intrusion and constriction establishes an oscillating rhythm. The dialectic of opposing psychological states is perhaps the most characteristic feature of the post-traumatic syndromes," (Herman, *Trauma* 47). On page 87 of *Trauma and* Recovery, Herman cites George Orwell's novel, *1984*, and presents the notion of *doublethink* introduced there as one of the most succinct representations of divided identity:

> Doublethink means the power of holding two contradictory beliefs in one's mind simultaneously, and accepting both of them. The [person] knows in which direction his memories must be altered;

> he therefore knows that he is playing tricks with reality; but by the exercise of *doublethink* he also satisfies himself that reality is not validated. The process has to be conscious, or it would not be carried out with sufficient precision, but it also has to be unconscious, or it would bring with it a feeling of falsity… Even in using the word *doublethink* it is necessary to exercise *doublethink*. (Orwell 176-177)

This last sentence reveals an essential correlation that is underscored by Lacan's theory: a correlation that exists between the inability to speak of the traumatic experience, and the resultant division of identity. It is doublethink to speak of trauma as doublethink precisely because the disunity inherent in two apparently contradictory beliefs presupposes disunity in the subject of cogito: that is, two thinkers, two speakers, two consciousnesses that must simultaneously be presumed to emanate from a single individual. This constitutes a violation of the basic social supposition that there should be a single cognitive process for a single individual: *ego cogito ergo sum*. Trauma, in other words, causes the individual to think suddenly beyond "what is thinkable." This, in turn, sets up an alternate "symbolized order" that contradicts the existent symbolic order, and that is therefore subject to censor. Descartes regarded doubting what appeared to be a seamless reality to be prerequisite to separating from it in order to found his existence as subject ("*ego dubito, ergo sum*"), however, the traumatized asserts the inverse to arrive at the same conclusion. The survivor must circumvent social censorship and believe in that which appears to be an illogically divided reality in order to experience authentic

subjectivity. The implication, at least for the traumatized individual, is that *cogito* and the symbolic order in which it operates are inadequate to capture the individual's subjectivity.

The result of *doublethink* is an invalidation of the traumatized in the dominant social discourse, whether socially, or in self-awareness; invalidation of experience, of testimony, and of identity. The invalidation is not always apparent, and often the exclusion is a part of the discourse that professes to support the victim, or at least to identify her symptoms in its (not her) terms. Orwell's statement that the person "knows in which direction his memories must be altered" and "[…] that he is playing tricks with reality" points to an assumption that is more often than not inherent in the traditional approach to trauma. The individual's response is viewed in the social order as a *pathological disorganization* of cognition and emotional response, one which must be repaired in order for the individual to regain her "health." Memories are expected to be altered, while divided perceptions are held to be false, a fundamental error in the cognition of the traumatized individual. In fact, the memory of an experience cannot be altered simply by volition, and some aspects of traumatic memory may not yet be integrated into conscious awareness and the terms and relations of symbolized meaning. Memory as a whole, both pre-symbolized and symbolized, can only be overlaid with a new interpretive narrative from a new deictic point of reference, resulting in a doubling into an experiential and a cognitive account that are at odds with one another. What will emerge as critical to the foundation of the crisis for the traumatized individual will be the inability of the prescriptive symbolic order to accommodate eccentric experience.

The essence of the underlying conflict, which began with the emergence of subjectivity in the nascent individual, is the crisis of incongruity, either temporary or protracted, between two equally critical dimensions of subjectivity. On the one hand, there is symbolized identity, in which trauma is defined by the fragmentation of the ego in the symbolic and social order to which it belongs and which, therefore, responds with efforts to suppress that which is heterogeneous to itself. On the other hand, there is an experiencing self, whose trauma is the fragmentation of subjective unity that results when it attempts to bring its experience to a symbolic order that cannot adequately accommodate it, and finds itself silenced as heretical. Thus the traumatized individual chronically occupies divided sites of subjectivity, and since each is authentic in its own terms, she finds herself hindered or even prevented from reconciling those positions to form a single discursive point of origin. Turned against herself, experiencer on the one hand, and discursive social being on the other, the individual must reconcile opposing traumata: an ethical trauma with its dissolution of shared meaning, and an epistemic trauma with its fragmentation of the unity of experience. In either instance, the trauma survivor is cast out of the social domain and the shared linguistic compact that meaning is shared and shareable, since the transparency of the connection between the speaking subject and the underlying experiencing subject is lost.

Naturally, society will claim that the ethical treatment of trauma has a place and plays a critical role in managing the reduction of future traumatic crisis. In as far as helping the individual resolve the experience of trauma, however, society maintains a vested interest in misidentifying the traumatic crisis by emphasizing only a half of the

conflicting dyad – the traumatized individual and her so-called "pathology," but not the structures called into question by her experience. The opposition formed between shared symbolized meaning and individual experience is an articulation of the opposition that forms between the functioning of the subject within language and in transcendence of that language through the veracity of individual experience. While indisputably serving a critical function, the ethical approach preferred by society speaks only for the trauma which is *shared* by the researcher/witness and the victim: the dissolution of the linguistic bond between them.

In *Unclaimed Experience*, Caruth consistently returns to the ethics of trauma and its resolution, stating: "I will suggest, that the shock of traumatic sight reveals at the heart of human subjectivity not so much an epistemological, but rather what can be defined as an ethical relation to the real" (92). The matter to be processed, Caruth contends, is the ethical imperative to awaken from grief and to bear witness (105). Moving away from an evaluation of trauma via social ethics, Caruth nevertheless applies a standard of formalist ethics. Like Lacan until very late in his work, Caruth privileges the symbolic order as authentic subjectivity, and ultimately, reality. Theories of trauma up to this point have therefore been theories of a narrative resolution to trauma.

Newer inquiries, however, including Caruth's cited above, have tended to focus increasingly on non-ethical matters such as the issue of how memory is organized, how incommensurability in cognition and in affect is constituted, and the structuring of the speech act. These approaches call the entire approach to an individual resolution to trauma into question. Caruth writes that "trauma seems to be much more than a

pathology, or the simple illness of a wounded psyche: it is always the story of a wound that cries out, that addresses us in the attempt to tell us of a reality or truth that is not otherwise available" (*Unclaimed* 4). Henke, too, specifically makes the division of the subject the focus of her inquiry, and drawing on Herman, states: "There seems to be little doubt that trauma precipitates a violent fragmentation of the (perhaps fantasized) image of the integrated subject. Traumatic events, Judith Herman tells us, 'shatter the construction of the self that is formed and sustained in relation to others' and 'cast the victim into a state of existential crisis.'"[54] These more recent and somewhat revolutionary approaches to trauma focus on the structure of the traumatic experience, and are beginning to shift the precipitating event into the background of the inquiry.

These newer approaches rest on work such as Lacan's, which redefines the traumatic moment as a fragmentation within the social self rather than simply a crisis of affect. As stated, the fragmentation is manifest, in many instances, in a doubling of existence or an alter identity. Van der Kolk observes: "Many traumatized persons […] experience long periods of time in which they live, as it were, in two different worlds: the realm of trauma and the realm of their current, ordinary life. Very often, it is impossible to bridge these worlds" (*Intrusive* 176-77). He goes on to cite a 1991 study by Langer as follows: "'[The world of trauma] can […] never be joined to the world he inhabits now. This suggests a permanent duality, not exactly a split or a doubling but a parallel existence. He switches from one to the other without synchronization because he is reporting not a *sequence* but a *simultaneity*'" (Langer 95). The subject of trauma thus

[54] Henke xvi-xvii. Henke cites Herman, *Trauma and Recovery* 51.

tries to be *two* (or more) subjects at once as individual experience articulates mutually preclusive sites within the symbolic order.[55]

This simultaneity occurs at an experiential, epistemic level, but in fact, the division is also manifested as a sequence at the level of the speaking subject, that is, within the symbolic order, which accounts for the impression that a doubling has occurred. The narrative discourses that arise out of these "parallel existences" contradict one another, and where mutually preclusive, must be expressed as separate identities. In fact, the parallel identities expressed represent separate dimensions of an identity whose unity is divided by the symbolic order. Out of competing discourses, a shifting metonymy forms that circumscribes individual identity, the essence of doublethink as applied to an individual trying to realign the ethics of the symbolic order and her own knowledge of experience. Incommensurate sites of subjectivity point back to lost epistemic unity, but are never able to totally express it, and therefore render it as parts of self that alternate in parallel to one another.

The literary analyses that I will present as case studies in the following chapters will demonstrate the fragmentation of subjectivity, and therefore of narrative that characterizes traumatic crisis. Indeed, the literary and filmic nature of these narratives provides the unique opportunity to create a bifurcated narrative using literary or visual devices that are unavailable to the individual in her immediate, first person account of traumatic experience. Trauma is a crisis of narrative, and more than that, it is a crisis of competing "realities" and competing apprehensions of meaning and identity. The trauma

[55] Langer bases this notion on the (literary memoir) work of Charlotte Delbo, and in particular, on *Days and Memory*. Charlotte Delbo, *Days and Memory*, trans. Rosette Lamont (Marlboro, Vt.: Malboro Press, 1990).

narrative must convey more than the factual events of a traumatic experience. It must express the coexistence of mutually preclusive apprehensions of meaning and identity that exist in a covalent relationship with one another. Those competing apprehensions, in other words, can neither be merged, nor can they be separated. In the superfluity of their conflicted expressions they create the silence of traumatic crisis where a unified expression of experience should exist, but does not.

Survivor testimony substantiates these observations with subjective experiences of psychic fragmentation. One Holocaust survivor, quoted in Langer, claims: "I live a double existence. The double of Auschwitz doesn't disturb me or mingle with my life. As if it weren't 'me' at all. Without this split, I wouldn't have been able to come back to live" (6). Likewise, subjectivity that existed before the trauma may be held in separation. Drawing on the Video Archive for Holocaust Testimonies at Yale, Felman quotes a Holocaust survivor who stayed with her estranged husband after the war, because as she claimed, he "knew who I was" (42). Writing about Hiroshima, Jay Lifton[56] observes the same phenomenon in survivors of that disaster, and remarks on the testimony of a mathematician who stated that being called "Sensei" by his students (an honorific used for teachers), "gave me very relaxed feeling" (Lifton, *Death* 44). Lifton interprets this as follows: "Being so addressed at such a moment can have the significance for the survivor of being 'confirmed' in his prior identity […]" (*Death* 44). The subjectivity of the traumatized individual may remain divided such that one remains hidden or private, the

[56] Robert Jay Lifton, *Death in Life: Survivors of Hiroshima* (New York: Random House, 1967).

other public. In other instances, as these case studies will demonstrate, private identity may be opposed by more than one public identity, each held in isolation of one another.

As I have suggested, the duality in the trauma survivor's identity is, in part, the result of a narrative incompatibility, as in the case of the survivors of the Holocaust or Hiroshima just cited. In some instances, the duality may also be reflected in the inaccessibility of memory to the individual who finds herself "caught between the extremes of amnesia or reliving the trauma, […]" (Herman, *Trauma* 47). This recognition of an existential duality returns us again to Janet's findings regarding dissociation and the division of experience into two, parallel systems of memory; *traumatic* and *narrative*, cited above. Narrative memory is summarized by van der Kolk as typified by its linguistic character. It is temporally altered, incorporating into itself ellipses, metaphor, metonymy, and other operations of language; a social act of communication (*Intrusive* 163). Traumatic memory, on the other hand, is typified by its resistance to language: "the experience cannot be organized as a linguistic level, and this failure to arrange the memory in words and symbols, leaves it to be organized in a somatosensory or iconic level" (van der Kolk, *Intrusive* 172). Rather than being shaped by linguistic operations that serve to interpret the experience from within the text, traumatic memories are reified, "produced by the mechanism that Janet called *restitutio ad integrum*. When one element of a traumatic experience is evoked, all other elements follow automatically" (van der Kolk, *Intrusive* 163).

One must not take the symbolic order and its narratives as merely abstract however. Van der Kolk and those who follow similar biomedical approaches to trauma

research have been able to discern certain neuro-anatomical and neuro-chemical features capable of substantiating these observations. Other researchers, such as Felman, Caruth, and Henke, follow a more humanities-based approach and have accurately identified a linguistic basis for the phenomenon, although they have failed to follow through with these findings. Caruth, cited above, has shifted the emphasis of her inquiry from the event that "caused" the trauma, and stresses instead the actual *structure of its experience* or its reception as definitive (*Trauma* 4). Likewise Julia Kristeva, in her work on the semiotic foundation of identity, alludes briefly to the phenomenological discourse that deals with the theoretical problem of divided subjectivity, but considers it beyond the scope of her study (*Revolution 22*).

Henke's observation comes closer to the kind of theoretical examination of trauma that will guide my case studies:

> Most psychoanalysts agree that traumatic experience generates inevitable psychic fragmentation – an aetiology that the Lacanian critic might construe as a disruption and dismemberment of the imaginary subject, the version of an integrated self that emerges from *méconnaissance* or misrecognition of one's valorized mirror image. Whether attributable to fantasy or social construction, such misrecognition is vital to the individual's sense of agency and subjectivity. In order to function as an effective being in the world, one must necessarily cling to this Lacanian *mesonge vitale* as an

> enabling myth of coherent identity, despite its status as a fictional construct. (Henke xvi)

In the phenomenon of "doublespeak," Henke rightly identifies the visible nature of an identity divided by trauma. Henke's approach correctly directs our focus towards the division of subjectivity between the socially constructed subject, and an underlying subjectivity that must find an adequate correlation between itself and that construct. Although she draws on Lacan and Kristeva only tangentially, frequently only in footnotes, the essential recognition of a systemic vulnerability through which the object may be fragmented nevertheless brings up a crucial point. Experiences which are retained in traumatic memory, resisting articulation in the symbolic order, may simply be retained this way because their passage into narrative memory is impeded or blocked.

Any individual's knowledge or experience that violates the symbolized meaning in any substantial way will radically denature the ethical subject and render unavailable "who one was" (Felman 42), i.e. the symbolic order and one's relation to its elements. It may also violate that order such that it destroys the individual's relationship with the shared symbolic order altogether. Such is the situation of the Hiroshima survivor, who must come to terms with the sudden and unexpected disappearance of an entire city, even before a widespread knowledge of atomic weapons created an awareness of this possibility (Lifton, *Death* 79), and subsequently, with the seemingly endless destructive but utterly imperceptible effects of the bomb's radiation (Lifton, *Death* 55).

Considering the possibility of describing Janet's cognitive schemata via the linguistic nature of subjective and objective identity, it likewise becomes possible to

understand traumatic phenomena such as hypermnesia and amnesia within the linguistic terms outlined by Lacan, and likewise by Kristeva in *Black Sun*.[57] Until it can be articulated, the traumatic experience is held, by necessity, in a separate system of memory, unmediated by language and unmingled with other memory. The establishment of a second, parallel identity may be a necessary stage, temporary or terminal, towards accommodating in language an experience or knowledge that otherwise could destroy "reason". The next section will examine some examples of this phenomenon, to make a more concrete case for the relation of trauma to irreconcilable narratives.

1.3.1 False Division of the Symbolic

We find a contemporary representation of the kind of divided subjectivity that can produce (rather than be produced by) trauma in the popular film, *The Net*, directed by Irwin Winkler.[58] Although this is a narrative belonging to popular culture, it nonetheless provides a remarkably clear illustration of the underlying problem faced in divided subjectivity. In the film, Sandra Bullock plays Angela Bennet, a computer specialist whose identity is stolen when a band of computer gangsters exchange her on-line records for those of someone else, Ruth Marx. Released in 1995, the film preys on society's not always unreasonable mistrust of its own technologies of information, situating the narrative crisis in the tension between the integrity of personal identity, and the social control of the public persona that curbs one's right to self-presentation. Like Frege's

[57] Julia Kristeva, *Black Sun: Depression and Melancholia*, trans. Leon S. Roudiez (New York: Columbia University Press, 1989).
[58] *The Net*, dir. Irwin Winkler, perf. Sandra Bullock, Jeremy Northam, Dennis Miller, and Diane Baker, 1995, Videocassette, Columbia Tristar Home Video, 1995.

Morning-Evening Star distinction, these two names split her identity through their divisive nomenclature, even while clearly referencing the same underlying subject, the individual herself as a social agent. The distinction exists only at the level of sense, however, which, as previously stated, belongs to the social compact regarding use in language practice.

Trusting in the standard schemata of mainstream film narrative, we can expect Angela Bennet to resume her former identity as though the rupture had never occurred as soon as the hackers have been suitably thwarted. This correlates to the notion that, after trauma, the victim will resolve his or her memory and experience so that it aligns with the symbolic order that preceded the experience, with memory on the one hand, and expectation (projected memory) on the other.[59] This notion of a nominal return to prior identity does not conform to the reality of trauma, however, which Freud characterized as an anamnesis: a lacuna in the personal narrative that cannot be filled. Beneath the superficiality of an exchange of names, which is a literal expression of divided identity, we find the actual rupture, which cannot be repaired by returning to a previous nomenclature.

Shocked that she is targeted for persecution, since she is "no one," (i.e. no one of particular importance or particular note) Angela Bennet faces the equally shocking reality that, in the mutual pairing of social authority with the volatility of an identity managed by

[59] Lotman and Uspensky describe this phenomenon in its relation to culture: "[…] culture very often is not geared to knowledge about the future, the future being envisaged as time come to a stop, as a stretched out 'now;' indeed, this is directly connected to the orientation towards the past, which also ensures the necessary stability, one of the conditions for the existence of culture" Yurij Lotman, and B. A. Uspensky, "On the Semiotic Mechanism of Culture," *Critical Theory Since 1965*, ed. Hazard Adams and Leroy Searle (Tallahassee: Florida State University Press, 1986) 412.

electronic data files, her identity is rendered socially mutable. She is, as the hacker band's password "nemo" indicates, "no one" in the dual sense of "no one" worth persecuting but also as someone fundamentally incapable of determining her social identity. "Why me, why me? I am nobody, I am nothing! They knew everything about me. […] They knew that I could be vanished; they knew that nobody would care, that nobody would understand, and that it wouldn't matter any more!"

At first glance, the conflict underlying the quote may not be apparent, but on closer examination, it becomes clear that this expression of crisis is also an expression of traumatic *doublethink*. Angela Bennet is shocked both because she is not enough of a "someone" to warrant her identity being stolen, while at the same time, she is not enough of a "someone" to prevent it. The traumatic subtext of the film is the conflict between identity and those agencies in the world that may speak more authoritatively to the subject's identity than the subject herself. From a broader point of view taken outside of the film narrative itself, this is not a phenomenon that arises with the Internet or modern technologies of data exchange, but is inherent in what Foucault would call the "technologies of knowledge," which enable social control through surveillance and the management of his personal history. Documents such as medical and psychiatric records, criminal files, or the media, which may contain errors or even deliberate misrepresentations, can be virtually impossible for the individual to challenge, and consequently may falsify identity, silencing subjectivity that is heterogeneous to the image painted in the public sphere, and eclipsing the underlying epistemic reality.

The kind of "identity theft" or "identity assassination" depicted in *The Net* constitutes an experience popularly regarded as negative that fragments subjectivity. Other experiences fragment subjectivity in a similar way, and yet are broadly regarded as *positive* experiences, even desirable and sought-after experiences. Great celebrity, for instance, constitutes a similar dehumanizing instance of regular traumatic rupture in which a public persona that is continually fed by media discourse, excessive scrutiny, and voyeurism, is not infrequently viewed publicly as more authentic than personal identity, while inevitably being incommensurate with it. Attempts to reclaim and embody a publicly constructed persona, like attempts of the conventional trauma victim to reduce identity to what can be articulated in symbolized terms, can lead to a crisis of subjectivity for the individual. Still, the public attitude is frequently insensitive to the traumatizing dimensions of celebrity such as the total invasion of the private sphere and widespread media coverage of intensely private events. Instead, the symbolic order (its profit-driven media and public consumers, in this instance) often views celebrity as desirable, which makes it a particularly interesting example of the limitations in what is understood and accepted as constituting trauma.

1.3.2 Doublethink as Doublespeak

Instances of socially reductive identity such as, celebrity or the "spoiled identity" of a criminal or psychiatric career,[60] literally exemplify identity divided by discursive incommensurability, although these instances may or may not emerge or be validated as

[60] Erving Goffman, *Asylums: Essays on the Social Situation of Mental Patients and Other Inmates* (Garden City, N.Y.: Anchor Books, 1961) 155.

traumatic within the socio-historical, event-based standard. In the theory I am proposing here, however, trauma defines itself by this mechanism, which can better be described as a division that occurs when any experience, whether event, circumstance, or emotional state, disrupts the unity of personal discourse by founding elements within that discourse that mutually exclude one another in the terms and relations of symbolized meaning. If personal experience, epistemic in nature, can find no expression in the symbolic order because language literally cannot accommodate it or hold it concurrently with other critical aspects of subjectivity, the response of the individual will be one of some degree of traumatic crisis.

This naturally occurring incommensurability in the subject is the reason for the delay in the onset of traumatic symptoms: traumatization can first be said to have occurred when the individual attempts to express experience in symbolized terms, and cannot find adequate means of signification. As will slowly become clearer over the course of this examination, the very theoretical and clinical discourses of trauma that are presently available, support a socially shared symbolic order, and attempt to rehabilitate experience to available meaning. In this way, they serve, ironically, to reinforce the limitations of the symbolic order in which trauma is rooted. The film, *The Net*, addresses this, tongue in cheek, when Angela Bennet's ex-therapist suggests that he might help alleviate her identity crisis and paranoia by helping her process her disrupted relationship with her father. The onus of traumatic disruption is placed on the individual as a manifestation of pathology when, as I will demonstrate in the chapters that follow, disruption ultimately occurs in the conflict between the need to modify symbolized

meaning so that it can express heterogeneous experience, and the need to maintain a socially shared apprehension of meaning such that the capacity to communicate socially is preserved.

A more "serious" example of traumatic crisis and its narrative underpinnings is provided by William Styron's novel, *Sophie's Choice*, later made well known through the film adaptation of director Alan Pakula.[61] *Sophie's Choice* springs from a canonical trauma narrative. Set in 1947 Brooklyn, the narrative (both in the novel and in the film) chronicles the complex relationship between a Southern writer, Stingo, a refugee from Krakow, Sophie, and her brilliant but mentally unstable Jewish lover, Nathan. The narrative addresses the difficulty in forming a definitive narrative of personal guilt or innocence in the aftermath of the Second World War, and in particular, the Holocaust. Styron presents the reader with a figure – Sophie – who is neither wholly innocent, nor wholly guilty, while at the same time sidestepping social outrage over such an ambiguous treatment of ethics by making Sophie a Christian and a Pole.

The title, *Sophie's Choice*, appears at first examination to reference the choice which Sophie was forced to make at Auschwitz, where the officer making the selection "allows" her to choose which of her two children will go to the children's camp, and which will go directly to the gas chamber. Sophie came to his attention when she attempted to distance herself from the Jews by declaring, in German, that she was Polish, and a Christian. In response, the officer, Höss, tells her: "You're a Polack, not a Yid. That gives you a privilege – a choice" (Styron 529). This notion of "privilege" is quite the

[61] William Styron, *Sophie's Choice* (New York: Random House, 1979). *Sophie's Choice*, dir. Alan J. Pakula, perf. Meryl Streep, Kevin Kline, and Peter MacNicol, 1982, DVD, Live Home Video, 1998.

opposite and it challenges reason in a manner that is similar to (if more dramatic than) Angela Bennet's dilemma of being 'no one.' The fact that Sophie is Polish does not, in fact, ensure her privileged treatment. Since Sophie has no way to estimate which of her children could better survive, the "choice" serves only to implicate Sophie along with the perpetrators in her children's deaths by ensnaring her in a persistent evaluation of her own guilt relative to the choice she finally makes: to "choose" to save her son by trying to have him enrolled in the Lebensborn program, and to "allow" her daughter to be sent directly to the gas chamber. The choice is an empty choice – a *doublethink* example of choice – since no choice that Sophie makes will save even one of her children. One child, her daughter, will die immediately, and the other, her son, will die later. (It is not without irony that Höss own "selection" separates the transported into these same two categories.)

A standard Freudian reading would say that Sophie's "choice" between her children at the camp was so terrible that it produced a rupture, called an *anamnesis*, in the cohesive flow of Sophie's personal story, characterized by a repetition compulsion and an overflow of the death drive. Freudian analysis would argue that the unity of that linear narrative of her life must somehow be restored if recovery is to occur, and that that restoration requires a reintegration of her horrendous and aberrant experience into that narrative in order to regain prior identity. There is no question that the choice between her children is an ethical outrage – an outrage which the viewer reflexively feels and which crystallizes around that pivotal scene with Höss. Nevertheless, this outrage cannot be the source of Sophie's divided subjectivity, since this choice poses no *irresolvable* moral dilemma, nor any conflict in the symbolic order that reasserts itself following the

war. Sophie's post-war crisis as to her own innocence or guilt references that moral outrage, but her traumatic discourse itself focuses on other experiences and other *choices*, including the choice to attempt to garner special favor at the Auschwitz selection by speaking German and separating herself as a Pole, not a Jew.

The choice between her children cannot be the primary source of moral conflict, since that "choice" is an amoral, empty choice. In purely mechanical terms, Sophie can be said to have made a choice to save her son and to abandon her daughter, but since that choice rests on pure chance and speculation on future results, one cannot speak of a choice that leads to an estimable evaluation of responsibility or culpability. The nominal choice set before Sophie in the camp does not provide Sophie with an opportunity to exercise agency; on the contrary, it serves only to emphasis her helplessness. Despite this, and despite the fact that no choice was available that could save even one child, she is unable to resolve her crisis after the war. This is because a deeper conflict is latent in Höss's statement as the site where actual conflict arises. As a Pole and a Christian, Sophie had had a "choice" as to whether to align herself with the victims or with the perpetrators, and there is a suggestion that in that choice, she will have already decided the fate of her children. The nefarious illusion of "privileged treatment" implies that, even in Auschwitz, she has a choice between ethical orders, while in fact, the choice is between her children is an outrage is inflicted on her. Her role in that choice is amoral.

The crisis in *Sophie's Choice* resembles the crisis in *The Net* in that it displays the same resistance of divided (world) views to merger and resolution. In *The Net,* the traumatic revelation of division is that identity can be variously defined and the

individual thereby rendered both autonomous subject and socially defined object. In *Sophie's Choice,* the traumatic experience is the necessity of making a choice during events that will be measured on a scale of absolute judgment and culpability, but which scale will emerge only in the wake of the event. In the narrative, Sophie's outrage vacillates between various sites of conflict and her "choice" is revealed to have been an entire series of choices, each reiterating the same crisis: the impossibility of making an adequate decision. This series of non-choices is characterized by their absolute futility: whether she made the best choice possible to ensure even one child's survival (Styron 538-39); whether she was too stupid or simply too cowardly to challenge her father's plans for the Jewish ghetto in Krakow or whether she is implicated in his guilt because she typed his anti-Semitic treatise (Styron 261); whether it was selfish or self-protective to refuse to translate documents for the Resistance (Styron 404-08), to work as Höss's secretary in Auschwitz (Styron 242), to claim to have helped write her father's Nazi treatise in order to convince Höss to put her son in the Lebensborn program, or to have identified herself as a Christian in order to distance herself from the other persecuted (Styron 528).

Sophie is already aware that having her son enrolled in the Lebensborn program will not constitute a guarantee that he will survive. A gifted linguist, and fluent in German, she was approached by the Resistance and asked to translate documents that would help the Lebensborn children who were being murdered. She declined to help, however, because she didn't want to endanger her own children's lives. Ultimately, no choice is adequate, just as no subsequent justification will be adequate. What began as a

reasonable choice becomes a liability later on, and her maternal instinct to safeguard her own children first will later form a part of her self-indictment of cowardice. There is no way to absolutely establish the degree of responsibility that she bears in the outcome of events. Sophie's apprehension of this inability to choose "correctly" is expressed as a fear that she is too stupid to have made the right decision in any of the choices with which she was confronted – most especially the choice between her children. If she had been too stupid to make those earlier choices correctly, as she asserts, then she was also too stupid to make the right choice and ensure one child's survival at the camp. If she had been smart enough to choose between them so that one survived, however, then she was also smart enough to have challenged her father, helped the resistance and so forth. Her ongoing examination of conscience centers on these two issues – ignorance and culpability – and shows us that her crisis is her *inability* to make an adequate choice that will render her *either* guilty *or* innocent. Since this inability places Sophie beyond the symbolic and ethical order, absolutely identifiable as neither perpetrator nor victim, it becomes impossible for her to create a discourse that adequately renders her experience. She experiences both; she speaks of neither in comprehensible terms.

Sophie's underlying crises are silenced by the overt atrocity of the choice at the camp, which seems to render those other crises so banal as to seem too trivial to talk about. Those crises are effectively silenced by the postwar mobilization of society to cope with the social and ethical crisis created by the Holocaust. Sophie emergence into post-war Brooklyn, and its symbolic order places the events she has lived through on the absolute scales of Good and Evil in which there are perpetrators and their victims, and

very little, if anything, in between – an ethics that does not conform with her own experience. Alternately treated by her lover, Nathan, as a helpless victim (Styron 69), then as a perpetrator who is no better than death itself (Styron 50-51), Sophie can only plead ignorance and her language reflects this; an amalgam of the idioms both of perpetrator and of victim, aggressor and liberator. After the war, her innate facility with language, crucial to her story, is thus rendered inadequate in the linguistic home in which she finds herself. In this language, and in this symbolic order, there is no expression for the choices she has had to make, or for the ambiguities that made an "adequate choice" difficult or even impossible. Sophie's truth is thus rendered "unspeakable," simply because the socially negotiated terms of language itself is inadequate to express the fragmented oppositions that appear to defy "reality" as society needs to define it. Meaning, and in particular, the ethical evaluation of meaning and identity must be unambiguous in order that reason can be found in the events that have taken place.

Styron chooses to put the crisis of non-choice through ignorance of an adequate evaluative system in the mouth of a Polish Catholic Holocaust survivor. Through this choice, he buys the permission to demonstrate the impossibility of ethics in a time of unreason, and the impossibility of speaking of that disaster in a symbolic order that weighs each choice of the individual on the scales of absolute Guilt and Innocence. The ethical value of many of Sophie's choices will be determined when, informed by the outcome, society reconstructs and assesses a socio-historical context to which no one had access during the events themselves. The antebellum ethical order, particularly in 1947, while the Nüremberg trials are being conducted, simply will not accommodate the

paradoxes and ethical ambiguity of her discourse. She cannot define herself, hence her reliance on her instable relationship with Nathan, whose alternating condemnation of Sophie as perpetrator, and nurturing of her as victim, creates a social compact (albeit limited) in which Sophie's discursively divided identity can be held.

The novel serves as an example of narrative conflict, and confirms the viability of the approach to trauma and identity that I am pursuing here. This close interplay of the personal and the social is arguably the most critical conflict in defining an experience traumatic, and it is demonstrated in a variety of texts that deal with event-based trauma. In an essay on Hiroshima, for example, Georges Bataille examines the political dimension of traumatic conflict as he observes that an individual's support of society and civilization, which are "made up of autonomous systems, each opposing each other" requires her to demonstrate an "indifference to the present instant."[62]

> It is strange that concern for the future at the level of the State immediately diminishes the individual's security and chances of survival. But this is precisely the sign of human indifference towards the present instant – in which we suffer and in which we die – […] that leaves powerless the desire to live. The need to make life secure wins out over this need to live. (Bataille 229)

Thus configured, Bataille argues, social ethics tacitly declare a self-interest in survival an act of civil disobedience. This opposition of socially prescribed social indifference towards survival against the organism's primal will to survive constitutes another locus of

[62] Georges Bataille, "Concerning the Accounts Given by the Residents of Hiroshima," *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*, ed. Cathy Caruth (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995) 229.

potential systemic breakdown that leads to trauma as I am defining it here. Every individual is both experiencing being and social, communicating being, and is driven to safeguard both her own life and identity, and the survival and cohesion of the social entity to which she belongs.

In the end analysis, Sophie is not able to make the decision to ethical self-sacrifice; to risk her children's lives in order to help the resistance, or to damage her fragile relationship with her father by persisting in challenging him in his political beliefs. However important the ethical discourse on trauma may be, particularly in catastrophic events where it is indisputably critical to the social good that culpability be clarified, it is an inadequate approach for dealing with the victims' outrage or their speechlessness. Indeed, it plays the greatest role in creating these by reinforcing the symbolic order and its prescriptive interpretive agenda. By so doing, the ethical discourse on trauma advances the cause of social trauma while limiting, both clinically and socially, the traumatic discourse of an individual who is challenging the mechanistic and insensate functioning of the symbolic order.

1.4 Divided Language

What we have examined thus far primarily via the brief examples of trauma narrative is traumatic crisis as divided subjectivity; a rupture in identity that arises out of a conflict between the epistemic subject who knows without categorical constraint but without speaking, and the ethical subject, who exists in a social context and may speak, but who rejects what cannot be contained within the existent logical and evaluative

relations that comprise its structure. This dissonance, which is natural and inherent to the internal organization of subjectivity, creates in every symbolic order the paradoxical condition whereby the trauma testimony destroys the linguistic medium with which it must be conveyed. In any culture, pressure exerted by the individual, somatosensory experience to expand the terms and categories of what may be articulated is met by the resistance of the symbolic order and the discursive community, which must safeguard the medium of mutual communication. The traumatized is literally compelled to speak another language than that belonging to the social order from which she is consequently excluded. In cognitive and linguistic terms, trauma constitutes a transgressive and potentially destructive knowledge that must deform the symbolic and the social order in order to be communicated and find resolution. Trauma will, therefore, take on forms that reveal the instances of subjectivity (a subjective knowledge) and the instances of ethics (socially validated orders).

Trauma is potentially a social gesture of revolution. The words that can be expressed within the delimitations of the symbolic order may be emptied of meaning when they have become denatured by traumatic association. As with divided identity, the divided signification of a sign or word creates a doubling whereby the socially shared use of the word and its post-traumatic association preclude one another, because they are incommensurate with one another. For the trauma survivor, an idea of the signified exists in unmediated experience that is not correlate with the sense of that signified in the shared symbolic order. This linguistic doubling is evident in survivor testimony, for example in the essays of Holocaust survivor, Charlotte Delbo:

> Because when I talk to you about Auschwitz, it is not from deep memory that my words issue. They come from external memory, If I may put it that way, from intellectual memory, the memory connected with thinking processes. Deep memory preserves sensations, physical imprints. It is the memory of the senses. For it isn't words that are swollen with emotional charge. Otherwise, someone who has been tortured by thirst for weeks on end could never again say "I'm thirsty. How about a cup of tea." This word has also split in two. *Thirst* has turned back into a word for commonplace use. (*Days* 3-4)

There are two potential outcomes to the trauma narrative once a narrative is revealed as to be comprised of at least two competing narrative threads, with different ethical and experiential claims: it must either submit to discrediting as a violation of the symbolic order, or it must in some way traumatize the witness and violate shared, symbolized meaning that precludes it to the point that shared meaning itself suffers discrediting and is modified.

In this first instance in which the traumatized individual's experience is discredited, that trauma narrative may flounder on the listener's inability comprehend the distortion of meaning, and consequently be misunderstood. In that case, the witness may either listen past the devastating detail with which he is presented, or the victim may be dismissed as lacking reason. We saw this social response in the example of *The Net*, in which Angela Bennet's inability to solicit help or convey the disruption to her identity

serves as a case in point of this. Her crisis is reduced to a Freudian manifestation of her relationship with her father by her friend and ex-therapist. The alternative available for trauma narrative is for traumatic experience to become speak-able: to traumatize the witness in some small way by recreating part or all of the rupture in her own apprehension of symbolized meaning as well, thereby forcing her to share traumatic *loss of meaning*.

Trauma is a transgressive knowledge of the fact that signification, in particular of the subject, is revealed to the individual as arbitrary and thetic positing an operation that follows the chance fracturing of the world into discrete elements. Lifton observes this phenomenon in his study of the after-effects of the atomic bomb on the survivors at Hiroshima when he notes that in the idiom of survivors, the distinction between life and death appeared to have become permeable: "Beyond death imagery per se, there was a widespread sense that life and death were out of phase with one another, no longer properly distinguishable – which lent an aura of weirdness and unreality to the entire city" (Lifton, *Death* 23). By extension, new subject positions will emerge as well: Caruth describes how seemingly incommensurate strands in a trauma narrative are "both compatible and absolutely inextricable," citing Freud's description of a train accident and the survivors' belated traumatic response to it:

> Is the trauma the encounter with death, or the ongoing experience of having survived it? […] I would suggest, [there] is thus a kind of double telling, the oscillation between a *crisis of death* and the correlative *crisis of life*: between the story of the unbearable nature

> of an event and the story of the unbearable nature of its survival (italics in original). (Caruth, *Unclaimed* 7)

This oscillation, a shifting metonymy, represents that moment when the arbitrary division between signifiers intrudes upon consciousness. The incompatibility of conflicted symbolized terms demonstrates the same incommensurability that occurs at the level of subjectivity itself.

The duality of identity and language with which survivors must often come to terms is sometimes spoken of in terms of a *quarantine* of knowledge that transgresses against both reason and cohesive meaning or identity. Langer cites one Holocaust survivor's description of this phenomenon:

> I often think about it, of course, how there is a sort of division, a sort of schizophrenic division, you know, a compartmentalization of what happened, and it's kept tightly separated, and yet as I said, it isn't. […] it's more a view of the world, a total world view… of extreme pessimism […], of sort of one feels… of really knowing the truth about people, human nature, about death, of really knowing the truth in a way that other people don't know it. (59)

This realization that a division in the symbolic order is arbitrary and yet has been valorized as "reality" (in this instance the division between life and death), results in a rupture of that symbolic order and leads to the expression of dual identity or dual perception.

The modification to symbolized meaning and identity occurs not only at the discrete point of rupture, but, as stated above, throughout the symbolic order as other signs are affected not by direct involvement in the crisis, but in their relation to the distorted element. Since the symbolic order represents a closed, homeostatic system, traumatic rupture does not constitute simply the loss of discrete instances of signification or the forced addition of new, eccentric signification. Rather, trauma brings about a denaturing of all of the symbolized terms and relations, out of which the subject will have to constitute her public identity. Even when the terms in her apprehension of symbolized meaning appear to correlate with the terms of shared, socially determined signification, what is available to the traumatized individual is a different language.

1.5 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have provided a brief introduction into trauma theory, along with a view of some of the difficulties faced in that discipline. Event-based explanations of traumatic crisis fail to provide an adequate etiological basis for the emergence of such crisis, which has proven to be unpredictable at best in terms of who will be affected, and what symptoms she will experience. Those symptoms themselves range from somatic disruptions, to the disruption of a personal sense of self, a disruption of language and ultimately, the disruption of the social fabric and the connections that bind us to one another. These inconsistencies in the traumatic reaction itself indicate that a definition of trauma using rigid criteria such as a specific event (i.e. war, genocide, incest, etc.), or a category of events (i.e. the so-called “catastrophic events”) cannot provide a universal

understanding of what constitutes psychic trauma. Such methods merely restrict any examination of traumatic crisis to our own cultural and linguistic reference – a post-Freudian, Western perspective.

In this chapter, I also presented a very brief examination of semiotic theory, including a few critical philosophical perspectives that help to lead up to the radical, linguistic view of the "subject" proposed by theorists such as Lacan, Kristeva, and Ricoeur (whom I will discuss in the following chapter), among others. In presenting that material, I began to lay the groundwork for what will be the chief focus of this study; a dynamic model of subjectivity that is centered not on the momentary stases or manifestations of meaning and identity, but rather, on the way in which experience helps to *generate* and *modify* subjectivity, and the ongoing process by which it does so. Experience begins with somatosensory impulses as an unshared and unmediated experience of our own body (not the object), and yet must somehow evolve to fulfill a broad range of disparate objectives. Experience, in other words, must be restructured within the individual body and individual cognition to form a basic spatial awareness, awareness of body-integrity and image, a discrete sense of self, an apprehension of symbolized meaning (including simultaneously held, hypothetical articulations of meaning and identity as in dream, fantasy, hypothetical supposition, etc.), and as a symbolized subjective identity. Ultimately, the same sensory experience must contribute to a public discourse and the social negotiation of meaning from the (perception of a) shared apprehension of the objects that surround us, to a shared, social ethics. All of this must evolve from the same nascent impulses conveyed to us via our receptors and

afferent nerves. It is in this complex series of objectives that must be fulfilled by human cognition that the basis for conflict arises, and here that traumatic crisis finds its origins.

In the chapter that follows, I will present a revised model of subjectivity that, based on a dynamic model, will explain not only the origin of the widely disparate and "unpredictable" symptoms of traumatic crisis, but will also explain the *necessity* of such crisis in *safeguarding* meaning. The dynamic, semiotic model, which owes more to Lacan's Borromean knot theory[63] than it does to his earlier topographic model, will allow me to define trauma within its own dynamic, without reliance on the kinds of positivistic array of events usually seen in trauma theory that, once declared the etiological origin of crisis, must then remain outside the scope of the inquiry as a *deus ex machina*. The dynamic model that will be presented in this study will allow the study of trauma to transcend this kind of positivistic cataloguing, as well as eliminate the need for tenuous and essentialist claims to socially ratified sites of trauma (i.e. claims of traumatization by events raised by later generations who, although traumatized, have no socially ratified event through which to legitimize their claim). Trauma, as it will be defined in this study, is a ubiquitously human experience, transcending social, cultural and historical boundaries, and originating with the very fabric of human cognition itself. Only by viewing it as such, and by relinquishing the need to delimit that which is viewed as traumatic to those events that traumatize society will it become possible to understand and even resolve the traumatic crisis.

[63] Jacques Lacan, *Feminine Sexuality: Jacques Lacan and the École Freudienne*, ed. Juliet Mitchell and Jaqueline Rose (New York: Pantheon Books, 1982) 163-170.

Chapter 2: The Structure of the Semiotic Current

I can interpret all her martyr'd signs –
She says, she drinks no other drink but tears,
Brew'd with her sorrow, mesh'd upon her cheeks.
Speechless complainer, I will learn thy thought;
In thy dumb action will I be as perfect
As begging hermits in their holy prayers:
Thou shalt not sigh, nor hold thy stumps to heaven,
Nor wink, nor nod, nor kneel, nor make a sign,
But I of these, will wrest an alphabet,
And by still practice learn to know thy meaning.

(*The Tragedy of Titus Andronicus* 2.36-45)[1]

2.0 Introduction

The purpose of this study, as stated in the previous chapter, is to dissociate our understanding of psychological trauma from notions of pathology or anomaly, redefining it instead as systemic disruption. Such disruption, as I will show, arises specifically when naturally occurring sub-processes in an ongoing *dynamic* of signification are attenuated. Under optimal circumstances, these sub-processes occur so swiftly that they remain beneath the threshold of our awareness. When they are attenuated, however, they give rise to what appear to be irregular or unpredictable symptoms that affect identity and meaning, and that are classifiable, at best, under a general pattern of "pathology" (see 1.0.2). The unpredictability of these symptoms and the failure of available theories of subjectivity to systematically account for them lead to a perception that traumatic crisis constitutes an anomalous and pathological breakdown of *meaning* and/or *subjectivity*. In this study, I argue that traumatic crisis is neither pathological nor anomalous, but in fact,

[1] William Shakespeare, *Titus Andronicus* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1948) 50.

comprises a part of the *successful* functioning of a dynamic semiotic system that generates both meaning and subjectivity. What are classified as "symptoms" are simply attenuated manifestations of states or conditions that are regularly present at a more or less subliminal level. More than this, traumatic crisis is essential to the preservation of the dynamic that drives that semiotic system and therefore in a very real sense, that crisis plays a crucial part in creating and preserving meaning and subjectivity.

In the chapter that follows, I will argue that meaning and subjectivity originate within a *dynamic flow* or *current* of neurocognitive function, in which individual instances of meaning are subordinate to the dynamic as a whole. If meaning is understood to arise within a continuous dynamic, it will follow that all concretized instances of meaning and identity must be treated as ephemera – what a theory of dynamics would term *observables.* These instances are meaningful not in that they are correlate with an objective "reality" (i.e., one that exists beyond the constructs of signification), but only in that they can be used to describe, and to some extent, predict the *behavior* of the semiotic current in which they have arisen. As a foundation to this proposed manner of looking at meaning and subjectivity, I will examine those basic qualities common to dynamic systems in general, drawing on a theory of dynamics for a modest set of essential definitions and principles that will be indispensable to this study. Finally, I will carefully define a set of functional domains that are circumscribed within a dynamic system of signification, specifying the essential role that each domain plays both in *generating* and *shaping* the current of meaning and subjectivity, as well as in *obstructing* that current.

While this chapter will, by necessity, be largely theoretical, laying the groundwork for the narrative analyses that follow in chapters three through five, I will begin this chapter with a brief narrative analysis of Alejandro Amenábar's 2001 film, *The Others*.[2] This analysis will be useful in establishing a referential framework from which to compare traditional expectations of trauma and trauma narrative with the redefinition of these proposed in this study. Amenábar's film provides an ideal narrative for this first analysis since, on the one hand, the film avails itself of firmly entrenched Freudian imagery for traumatic crisis that is likely to be familiar to the reader. At the same time, the film's exceptionally nuanced use of that imagery provides a readily accessible entry point for a revised outlook on outdated assumptions about trauma.

2.1 Separating Light from Darkness: The Origins of Traumatic Opposition

Set on the Isle of Jersey just following the Second World War, Amenábar's film, *The Others* (2001), depicts the struggles of Grace, a young mother who has had to cope with the responsibility of raising her two children alone amidst the German occupation. Although the war has already ended by the time the narrative begins, Grace has had no word from her husband, whom she fears may have been killed in the war. (As the viewer later discovers, this is indeed the case.) In addition, she has had to come to terms with her situation with no ancillary support since not only did her entire extended family flee the island shortly before the German invasion but, as she relates, even the servants have abandoned her, disappearing suddenly: "No notice; didn't even collect their wages."

[2] *The Others*, dir. Alejandro Amenábar, perf. Nichole Kidman, Fionnula Flanagan, Christopher Eckleston, and Alakina Mann, 2001, DVD, Buena Vista Home Entertainment, 2002.

Among all of these stressors, the greatest burden placed upon Grace is the fact that her two children, Ann and Nicholas, suffer from *Xeroderma Pigmentosum*, a rare genetic disorder that leaves them with a life-threatening allergy to light. The children are acutely photosensitive and exposure to light any stronger than what is produced by a wick lamp has the potential to raise blisters and impair their breathing. In order to prevent accidental exposure, anaphylactic shock and death by suffocation, the home must be kept largely in darkness so that in finding one's way around its many rooms, "one scarcely knows whether there is a table, or a chair, or one of my children playing…" Everyday life in the household follows a rigorous and unyielding routine that Grace has been forced to develop as a means of controlling both the children's whereabouts and the amount of light permitted to enter the home. Under these conditions, the home is, as Grace relates, "like a prison" and her life in it "[…] difficult. One might almost say, unbearable."

The demands of the household routine are complicated by the fact that the house is not kept entirely dark. Under isolated circumstances when the children are not present, the curtains can be drawn back to allow Grace and the servants to work. While this arrangement permits light to be utilized, it also complicates the matter of protecting the children. In order to assure that they are not accidentally exposed, they must be kept shut up one room or another. Doors are locked and unlocked, and rooms and passageways are serially darkened as the children are moved from one room to the next – precautions, which contain and manage the children as much as they do the light, and which dramatically increase the home's likeness to a prison. The difficulty in maintaining this routine is considerable. "This house is like a ship," Grace curtly informs three newly

arrived servants at the beginning of the film. “The light must be contained as if it were water by opening and closing the doors. My children’s lives are at stake.”

Light’s destructive quality is emphasized in the film, however it also has a productive potential, which lies in the fact that it creates – through its presence or absence – parallel domains of light and of darkness. Each of these domains is available to Grace and each generates a specific manner of existence – one in which she is with her children but confined in darkness, and one in which she is unencumbered by that darkness but alone. The relative value of each of these domains is ambiguous since each possesses something that is indispensable as well as something that is unendurable. In the domain of light, Grace may escape the darkness and the burden of protecting her children’s vulnerable health, but in order to do so, she must somehow be rid of the children (whether temporarily or permanently). At the same time, to remain with her children as their mother, she must also remain with them in darkness as their custodian or warder, both subjugating them to a kind of imprisonment and enduring that imprisonment herself.

The ambiguous value of each of these domains lies not only in the fact that neither domain can be wholly desired, nor wholly repudiated, but also in the fact that each possesses the solution for what is unendurable in its sister domain. The domains are linked in a reciprocal relationship such that they may neither be merged, nor separated from one another. Grace’s existence oscillates between what appear to be diametrically opposed worlds that compete with one another, deny one another’s validity, and defy all attempts at reconciliation. Since light’s absence or presence creates these coexistent domains, it is not surprising that Grace’s relationship with light itself is ambivalent.

Grace hints both at this ambivalence and at the radical entanglement of her parallel modes of existence when she tells the new housekeeper, Mrs. Mills: "You will soon discover that nothing in this house moves except the light. But it changes everything."

The suffocating regimen of the home and the ominous potential for disaster create a gloomy and sinister backdrop to the narrative – a horror scenario that is made complete by the fact that the home appears to be haunted. Grace's daughter, Ann, is the first to claim to see apparitions who, she claims, move freely about the house, talking with her, and opening doors and curtains. Although it remains unresolved until late in the film whether there truly are any ghosts or whether Ann has fabricated them, this possible haunting introduces an immediate threat to the family, as the unexplained opening of curtains and unlocking of doors breaches the carefully managed separation of light and darkness. Through this degree of unpredictability, light acquires a kind of independent volition that allows it to violate the controls and checks of the household regimen. Regardless whether the home truly is haunted or whether the curtains and doors are being left open by some member of the household (Ann, the servants, or Grace herself), the end effect is that light can no longer be adequately controlled to ensure the children's safety.

The idea that the home is haunted adds an intriguing dimension to the motif of light separated from darkness, blurring the careful separation of the two through the loss of volitional control. At the same time, this purported haunting is pivotal to the development of separate or competing narratives as analogous to that more literal separation. Responding to Ann's insistence that she has seen ghosts, Grace accuses her of fabricating stories of apparitions either to frighten her brother or to gain attention. This

accusation and Ann's obstinate avowal comprise but one of many apparent inconsistencies that reflect a struggle among the film's characters as to what constitutes the "reality" of their situation or condition. Grace, Ann, and Nicholas mutually censor one another and while Grace harshly suppresses the children's discussion of certain topics, the children themselves strive to silence one another within their own limited domain of influence. Ann, for example, prevents Nicholas from suggesting that their father may not return home from the war. She herself is silenced first by Nicholas, and then by Grace's sudden arrival when she makes reference to prior troubles in the home, telling the housekeeper, Mrs. Mills, that "Mummy went mad." "I don't like fantasies," Grace subsequently warns Mrs. Mills. "Strange ideas – you know what I mean? My children sometimes have strange ideas, but you mustn't pay any attention to them. Children will be children."

On the surface, Grace's statement that "children will be children" appears to refer to a tendency to exaggerate and fantasize that is often attributed to children, thereby discrediting the children's sometimes contradictory interpretations of reality within the narrative. This is by no means the only interpretation of this statement, however, since the truth is also known often to come "from the mouths of babes." The statement's ambiguity is underscored in a later scene, in which Nicholas reads aloud the story of Justin and Pastore – two children who are martyred by the Romans because they refuse to deny their faith. Ann expresses outraged at what she sees as their fatal and pointless obstinacy and she declares that she would have lied and denied the truth to save herself, even though privately she would have believed differently. If she had lied, Grace

admonishes her, she would have gone to "the children's limbo, at the center of the earth where it's very, very hot. That's where children go who tell lies, but they don't go there for a few days. Oh no… no. They're damned forever." The scene takes on a darkly ironic tone when one recognizes that the truth is never fully spoken in the home; neither by Grace nor by the children. These moments of mutual censorship reveal that, along with the management of light, there is a stringent management of information and it is not readily apparent what truth underlies this censorship.

This development of competing narrative realities mimics the more literal separation of light from darkness in that, like that literal separation, these narrative variants can neither be merged, nor separated from one another. Rather, they create a narrative whole made up of simultaneously existent but mutually exclusive parts – a narrative manifestation of Orwellian *doublethink* (see 1.3). The question as to how we are to interpret the phrase "children will be children," like the inconsistencies among the characters' presentations of reality, remains open. What is certain, however, is that the inconsistencies among the characters' mutually incompatible apprehensions of "reality" do indeed create a kind of limbo – an interpretive limbo – into which the viewer herself is cast.

The censorship of "offensive" discourse and the inconsistencies among the characters' portrayals of "reality" reveal a method of dealing with difficult circumstances that relies heavily upon what Freud termed *repression.* Grace in particular seeks to ban unwanted awareness by preventing certain ideas from seeing the light of day – a method of control that she terms "keeping a cool head." What has been repressed in Grace's

awareness, suppressed in familial discourse, and only hinted at in the narrative finally comes to light late in the film. Unable to cope with the lasting strain of her situation, Grace has suffocated her children and then killed herself – an event that occurred prior to the narrative's beginning and to which Ann had hinted when she mentioned that Grace had "gone mad."

This revelation that Grace and her children are dead rewrites the entire filmic reality beginning with the seemingly inconsequential event of the servants' abrupt departure without their wages. Far from a callous act of abandonment, it is revealed that their departure was necessary, since they no longer had an employer from whom to collect those wages. More significantly, the viewer discovers that the beings believed to be haunting the home are not ghosts at all but the *living* – individuals who have moved into a home left vacant after the family's death. The home is indeed haunted; however it is Grace and her children who are the ghosts. With this revelation – essentially a complete reversal of the film's initial premise, all aspects of the film's narrative "reality" become suspect including the assumption that the children are photosensitive. In fact, they cannot be harmed by light any longer, and Grace's continued efforts to shield them from exposure become a reflection of the degree to which she has repressed any awareness of their deaths. The separation of light from darkness can no longer be interpreted in a primarily literal sense, and the film is opened up to a metaphoric reading – one which, as we will see, centers on the censure of traumatic awareness.

The definitive break in the film's narrative premise occurs when the home's new residents hold a séance in order to contact and presumably expel Grace and her children.

In the only glimpse we are offered from the perspective of the "living" we see the séance table shake and objects fly disembodied through the room, while Grace protests and tries to confront the "ghosts" that "haunt" her home. The viewer is finally permitted to see what Grace herself has failed to recognize – that she and her children are trapped in a kind of limbo between their previous earthly existence and their existence as shades, and more specifically, that they are trapped by their inability to accept the tragic circumstances of their own deaths. At an interpretive level, two parallel, metaphoric divisions emerge alongside the literal division of Grace's world into domains of light and of darkness. There is a division of metaphysical domains – those of life and of death – which can neither be merged nor separated, and simultaneously a division between what remains darkened from memory and what has been permitted to come to the light of awareness.

In creating concurrent but competing levels of interpretation and in reversing the narrative premise late in the film, Amenábar utilizes our expectations as viewers to seduce us into what would otherwise be regarded as an abject viewpoint – that belonging to the ghost or monster. At a more subtle level, the manipulation of those expectations provides the viewer with an empathic understanding of Grace's traumatic crisis. Her awareness, which at first guided our own apprehension of the narrative reality, has been compartmentalized and restricted by traumatic repression much as the house is compartmentalized to the passage of light. By revealing the fragmentation of Grace's awareness of "reality" only after the viewer has been led to subscribe to that "reality," Amenábar creates an uncertainty in the viewer that mimics the uncertainty that Grace

herself must feel as her falsified story is eroded and as she remembers the terrible events she has darkened from memory.

There is no discrete moment at which the narrative is clarified for the viewer, and instead, the premise of the narrative is undermined in serial increments. The viewer, in other words, is subjected in some small measure to the traumatic process itself with its competing realities and resistance to a cohesive symbolized apprehension of all awareness. The "meaning" of the film as it is carefully constructed by the viewer must repeatedly be discarded and created anew and as a result, we are left in a kind of limbo in which differing versions of the narrative simultaneously compete with one another. This fragmentation of the narrative itself generates an empathic understanding of how traumatic crisis is able to annul meaning and bifurcate personal experience into competing "realities" (see 1.3). The cinematic landscape shifts and just as the movement of light in the house "changes everything," so too the advance of realization changes the landscape of the narrative for the viewer.

The separation of light and darkness remains central to the narrative however the literal meaning of their separation is substantially altered, allowing a metaphoric interpretation of that separation to take the foreground. Light retains the capacity not only to release Grace from her imprisonment, but also to "kill" the children, since their invulnerability to light would destroy the protective fallacy of traumatic repression in which Grace keeps them "alive." Their failure to be harmed by light, in other words, would reveal the truth that the children are dead. It would also allow Grace to escape her dark imprisonment, both literally and in the sense of being "enlightened" – that is, she

would escape the literal darkness of a home designed to "protect" her children, she would escape an existence that is suspended between life and death, and finally, she would escape a conscious awareness that is held in censorial darkness by traumatic repression. These interpretative levels are intertwined and each level contributes to a continuous progression of meaning such that the literal, metaphysical, and metaphoric can neither be merged, nor separated. I will return to this progression of interrelated meaning in sections that follow in this chapter.

As a narrative, *The Others* deals with subject matter that is widely acknowledged as traumatic. Returning here to the phenomenon of trauma itself, the metaphoric imagery in the film lends itself to analysis using dominant strains of theoretical inquiry into trauma and the trauma narrative. A psychoanalytic interpretation of the film would suggest that the traumatic event (the children's murder and Grace's subsequent suicide) was so terrible that it had to be *removed* or *banned* from awareness.[3] As described in the previous chapter, such *repression* occurs when an event is judged to be so ethically abhorrent that it is *actively* excluded from conscious awareness (see 1.0). As a neurocognitive approach on the other hand, Janet's theory of *dissociation* would posit that the experience of the murder/suicide so violated the existent cognitive schemata that

[3] Specific features within the narrative lend themselves to a traditional, largely Freudian interpretation of traumatic crisis. These features reflect what psychoanalysis terms defenses (primary and secondary) against unwanted realization and should be broadly recognizable to the modern viewer, even if the specific psychological terminology for those defenses is not. The first of these defenses is what psychoanalysis would term displacement – the transfer of signified meaning from one instance to another. In addition to the manner in which darkness and light are made to symbolize repression and realization, Grace's specific fear that the children may suffocate if they are exposed to light offers a classic example of the displacement of the repressed event of their actual smothering. Similarly, we find examples of other key defenses associated with traumatic crisis such as condensation, in which multiple instances of signified meaning are attached to a single signifier. The most prominent instance of such is the literal, metaphysical, and metaphoric significance of light and darkness (light/darkness, life/death, and awareness/repression, respectively), all of which come to be attached to the absence or presence of light.

it could not be accommodated into the schemata's innate structure. Rather than being "unthinkable" because it is ethically abhorrent, dissociated experience is unthinkable because it is unrecognizable within the terms and relations of cognitive thought. Such experience is said to be *passively* excluded on the basis of systemic incompatibility rather than on the basis of active evaluation and rejection.

While both theories offer some explanation for traumatic memory (see 1.3), the complexity of Grace's compartmentalized memory indicates what has likewise been attested in modern trauma theory – that neither Freudian repression nor Janet's dissociation provides a theoretical explanation that adequately accounts for the phenomena associated with traumatic memory. It is not possible to say, for instance, that either an exclusively active process of repression or an exclusively passive process of dissociation leads to Grace's inability to recall the murder/suicide. Rather, there are both active *and* passive elements in the manner in which light and enlightenment are controlled. Both passive and active elements are evident in Grace's active effort to prevent her children from being exposed to light. On the one hand, exposure would betray their post-mortem invulnerability to its effects and therefore we can say that this active *avoidance* of that particular experience accords with Freud's notion of active avoidance and repression. At the same time, as long as the children are not exposed, the proof that they are invulnerable remains passively unavailable in the same way that the active exclusion of light does not nullify the passive unavailability of what is held in darkness.

One might argue that Grace's protection of the children is simply guided by her previous assumption that they are still photosensitive, which would suggest the passive unavailability of any alternate interpretation in the cognitive schemata. The possibility that she is truly unaware that the children are dead is belied by the fact that that Grace censors certain speech and reference to specific events. This active censoring betrays the fact that, at some level, she is both aware of and wishes to prohibit something as abhorrent and deserving of censor. Her ability to *recognize* what is abhorrent (what Kristeva terms *abject*) must, in some measure, be attributed to its having acquired some signified value, even if that value is *displaced*. The abject, in other words, cannot be rejected on the basis of active evaluation unless it exists in some form in the "cognitive schemata" (e.g., the symbolic order). Here again, however, the active prohibition of certain discourse does not nullify the unavailability of what such discourse might reveal. If the abject is actively repudiated and expelled from the symbolic order, then one must also say that it is in some way *not* accommodated, and that it *cannot* be accommodated unless there is a reanalysis of that order. The outrage of the abject is derived in part from its violation of meaning and identity, and most particularly, from the separation of what is Self from what is Other. The basis of active rejection is the notion that the abject cannot and must not be accommodated by reason. The intrusion of experience that cannot be accommodated, in other words, is rejected both because of passive incompatibility, and because the intrusion of the abject is actively judged abhorrent.

The intermingling of both active and passive processes in traumatic memory points to a significant difficulty that continues to divide current trauma theory; the

inability to establish either dissociation or repression as the fundamental mechanism behind traumatic crisis and, at the same time, the inability to formulate a theory that adequately accommodates both as contributors to that process. Rather than a process that is either passive or active, the management of traumatic experience appears to represent a manifold process that is both simultaneously active and passive, and that occurs in interconnected stages. The defenses against specific awareness are not monolithic such that a defense falls once it has been breached by banned awareness. Rather, these defenses work to guard against heterogeneous experience much in the same way that Grace describes the home's defense against light – that is, like a ship that is divided into compartments in order to facilitate a *graduated containment*.

Neither repression nor dissociation is conceived to accommodate a graded sequence of barriers. Instead, each focuses on a single threshold that must be crossed in order for an experience to become a part of what has alternately been called "reason," the "cognitive schemata," or the "symbolic order." The reality of recovering what has been "forgotten" in traumatic experience is far different and, as stated in the previous chapter, that recovery is fragmented – characterized by *stages* of recovery (Herman, *Trauma* 175-195). Likewise in the film, we see that there is no single breach in Grace's defenses, but rather a series of breaches that lead to distinct *stages* or *levels* of awareness. Only when the prohibition of *speaking* about ghosts has been irrevocably violated does Grace begin to *see* those ghosts, and from seeing them, begin to address them, albeit as intruders rather than as ghosts. Finally, once she is able to acknowledge their existence and to identify them as "other-worldly" (i.e., not belonging to *her* domain of existence), she is

able to confront the reality that it is actually she and the children who are dead. Awareness comes in serial increments, passing through various stages and levels to culminate in the terrible realization that it is she, and not the light, who has suffocated the children and who is ultimately responsible for their deaths.

The critical features I have just mentioned – the intermingling of both passive and active elements in traumatic repression and the management of awareness in stages – will form the focus of the remainder of this chapter. In the sections that follow, I will begin outlining a model of subjectivity that is based on the premise that cognition and subjectivity arise within an ongoing *current* of semiotic activity. That current originates with the first instances of sensory experience, and then passes through and is shaped by a series of functional domains. Understanding the circuitous passage of experience via these domains will enable us to account for the broad range of cognitive phenomena that arise from the same initial sensory input – from an awareness of the body, the separation of *self* (as experiencer) from *other* (as experienced), the formation of a symbolized order (Janet's 'cognitive schemata'), to the acquisition of language, and co-founding of a shared social ethics.

More specific to the experience of traumatic crisis itself, the model proposed here will enable us to comprehend the existence of seemingly contradictory symptoms associated with that crisis, making apparent how competing explanatory theories each contribute indispensably towards, but fail to fully provide an adequate account of traumatic crisis as a whole. In a model that defines a *current* of semiotic activity and that distinguishes contiguous but functionally distinct domains of organization, such

contradiction or paradox, as well as phenomena such as the gradual containment of heterodoxic awareness will cease to pose a challenge to theoretical interpretation. I will begin in the next section by outlining, in broad terms, the characteristics basic to dynamic system in general in order to introduce those terms and concepts needed to form an understanding of a semiotic current and its behavior.

2.2 Force and Counterforce: How the Potential for Signification Arises

Despite an innate perception that meaning and identity corresponds with a more or less stable external reality, they are actually generated and constantly regenerated within a continuous and circuitous flow of experience.[4] That single, ongoing *current* of sensory perception, cognition, and ultimately, communication must fulfill a number of disparate objectives ranging from the generation of bodily awareness to the negotiation of a shared, social ethics. As outlined in the previous chapter, theorists such as Lacan, Kristeva, and Ricoeur have attempted to account for the range of objectives that must be fulfilled using the same experiential input by defining specific *organizational domains*. Regardless whether they are defined as the *symbolic*, *imaginary*, and *real* (Lacan), the

[4] The concept of a dynamic of cognition, identity, or signification is not a novel one. William James posited something similar in his *Principles of Psychology*, in which he described the "stream of thought." William James, *The Principles of Psychology*, vol. 1 (New York: Dover Publications, 1918) 224-290. More recently in cognitive science, researchers such as George Lakoff and Mark Johnson have drawn on the work of dozens of researchers to postulate an incremental but integrated progression from sensory perception to abstract reasoning. George Lakoff, and Mark Johnson, *Philosophy in the Flesh: The Embodied Mind and Its Challenge to Western Thought* (New York: Basic Books, 1999). Likewise in the fields of semiotics and philosophy, which are of greatest interest to us here, some attempts have been made to move away from "topographies" and concretized models. Towards the end of his career Lacan in particular began to search for a "matheme of psychoanalysis" that would allow him to bypass what had become concretized in his own theory (Lacan, *Feminine* 162). With his "Boromenean Knot Theory," Lacan sought to express the endlessly recursive interconnection of every signified instance with every other. "Don't think that by cutting through any one nexus of the weave you would set free any part whatsoever of what it is tied to. If you cut only one ring, then the six rings in between, thereby freed, will be held in place by the six times three (eighteen) other rings to which they are tied in borromenean fashion" (Lacan, *Feminine* 163).

semiotic and the *symbolic* (Kristeva), or as *personal* and *narrative identity* (Ricoeur), such organizational domains articulate and arrange experience according to their own distinct internal structure. By defining organizational domains of this sort, these theorists have established models of subjectivity that begin to account for the conflict that can be engendered in cognition, subjectivity, and communication.

In this study, I will draw on the work of theorists such as those mentioned above in order to define functional domains, since such domains allow an analysis of the distinct ways in which experience is shaped and structured. At the same time, my focus will be on the dynamic current of experience that passes through and is shaped by these domains. It is essential to remember that these kinds of domains are conventions that are defined as a convenience to theoretical discourse. In this study, I will use functional domains to specify subordinated regions within a single dynamic process in order to facilitate an understanding of the overall function. In this same way, one might describe a section in a riverbed and its influence on the river's current without claiming that any section retains its function or "meaning" independent of the current it helps to channel. In any theoretical model of a dynamic system, divisions are imposed upon what is truly a unified entity by specifying perceptible characteristics – what may also be termed *observables*. These observables dictate the manner in which the contiguous whole is to be divided by focusing on what can be measured ("observed") parametrically and what is available to the concretizing terms of cognition and language.

Fields such as physics and mathematics have long been called upon to negotiate the challenges posed by complex dynamic systems. A dynamic or current cannot be

adequately grasped if the focus is placed on discrete data (i.e., the location of a single positive charge within an electrical current or a single numeric value generated within a differential equation). Researchers in these fields have developed specific conventions that utilize variable values (observables) to plot the *course* or *behavior* of the dynamic in question, while at the same time safeguarding the systems they describe against concretization by human cognition and language. Since the model of signification being pursued here poses the same challenges as dynamic systems in other fields, I will use this section to introduce the few terms and concepts from those fields that will prove useful to later discussion of specific functional domains.[5]

All dynamic systems are founded on a *differential*. A differential is created when that system's elements are arranged such that differing forces are exerted on its medium. If we take fluid dynamics as a model, a differential is established when the fluid contained in that system is held at differing degrees of pressure (e.g., a greater gravitational force is exerted on fluid held at a greater height). That differential generates an *impetus*, which drives fluid held at a higher pressure in one region of the system

[5] A terminology exists for the *kinds* of organizational distinctions that characterize signification and subjectivity. Most notably, Jacques Lacan (real/imaginary/symbolic), Julia Kristeva (semiotic/symbolic), and Paul Ricoeur (reflective subject/narrative subject) have attempted, through their work, to define a vocabulary that expresses the extreme mutability of meaning and the arbitrary origin of its connections to an external reality. See (Lacan, *Écrits* 125), (Kristeva, *Revolution* 22-23). Paul Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another*, trans. Kathleen Blamey (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992) 2. This vocabulary has found a wider application among a variety of related disciplines (linguistics, semiotics, literary studies, sociology, and psychology, to name a notable few), and therefore has acquired a degree of currency among scholars, however overtime, it has itself acquired a concretized and concretizing quality; in part due to a lack of tolerance for perceived ambiguity on the part of the reader, and in part, due to the convoluted, often inscrutable presentation of those terms, which are frequently difficult for even a motivated reader to grasp. Ultimately, this terminology has become so imbued with associations of comparison and stasis, (Lacan himself privileged first one, then the other order) that its use becomes more of a hindrance than a help. Thus, while I acknowledge a profound debt to these theorists, I will nonetheless lay aside that more established terminology in favor of a set of terms that will better facilitate a focus on dynamic.

towards regions held at a lower pressure. The relative degree of the differential, coupled with the natural tendency of all dynamic systems to seek homeostatic balance (entropy), establishes that system's *capacity* for dynamic movement. A greater differential, in other words, will, up to a point, generate a greater dynamic movement as it seeks to level the "conflict" of its parts. By the same token, the leveling of the differential and the "resolution" of systemic conflict (i.e., through the even distribution of systemic pressure, etc.) must spell the *end* of that dynamic, since impetus is lost and current ceases in the absence of a differential. Accordingly, the resolution of all "conflict" is *not* the desired outcome for a system in which the dynamic itself is the goal.

Up to a certain point, the greater the differential, the greater its capacity to generate an impetus and drive a current, however if that impetus becomes too powerful, it may exceed the system's capacity to accommodate it. A river into which there is a large influx of water, for instance, may be unable to channel that larger volume. There is a set of possible dynamic outcomes that may result, depending upon the force of the impetus, the degree of resistance (counterforce) that opposes it, and the innate structural vulnerabilities of the system. If a system's structure cannot accommodate an impetus, such impetus may have to subtly alter the system in order to reduce or eliminate resistance – much in the same way that a powerful current of water may erode and eventually widen the channel through which it flows in order to better accommodate its force and volume. Similarly, if an impetus is very powerful, it may overflow to establish a diverted and essentially competing current. Finally, failing to adequately dissipate its

force by other means, a powerful impetus may simply overwhelm the system, thereby destroying its structural integrity.

Not all impetus that fails to be accommodated by the system automatically elicits a radical change to that system. The challenge to the system's integrity may occur gradually, following a long series of lesser challenges or a slow buildup of impetus. Unless it is otherwise dissipated, a weaker impetus that cannot be accommodated but that also lacks the force to abruptly alter, destroy or bypass what impedes it will be retained at the threshold of the differential as a latent tension. If an impetus so retained receives the cumulative support of subsequent impetus, it may *become* a more powerful impetus and behave accordingly – by altering, destroying, or bypassing what impedes it. In this way, a weaker impetus may *kindle* slowly to disrupt the system through a gradual or delayed process that cannot be correlated with a sudden shock to the system.

As we examine the complex interaction of sensory experience, cognition, and communication within this paradigm of a *dynamic system*, these same possible outcomes may arise for distinct aspects of experience at any point in the system where a differential is established. As I will show, signification is a complex and asynchronous system comprised of *multiple* differentials that are established at the threshold between specific organizational domains (based on determined observables). Given the complexity of such a system and the number of variables involved, it should not be surprising that disruption to that system should evoke multiple and seemingly unrelated "symptoms" in different persons in response to the same event, or that there should be enormous "unpredictability" as to which "events" (more accurately, *experiences*) precipitate those

symptoms. If we shift our focus away from the specifics of the symptoms and towards both the behavior of the overall current and the locus in the system where it is impeded, we can begin to account for the range of manifestations observed in traumatic crisis in an organized manner. More than that, a single theoretical approach can be established for what have hitherto been treated as distinct traumatic phenomena, doing away with the necessity for discretely defined subgenres of traumatic phenomena and narrative.

Signification, as I will show, resembles all dynamic systems in that it is driven by a state of constant tension created by its differentials, which is to say, it is driven by *conflict*. What makes signification unique among dynamic systems, however, is that it constitutes the current of our own subjectivity, cognition, and apprehension of meaning. As such, that current tends to be interpreted as orthodoxy by the cognition evoked by that current rather than as the arbitrary system it truly represents. The cognitive tendency to generate a perception of stasis helps to guard against the dissolution of "meaning" and the breakdown of communication that might occur if the individual remained constantly aware both of dynamic changes in the system and of the disparate and often conflicting objectives that the semiotic system must fulfill. The semiotic current is characterized then both by an underlying and essential conflict (differential) that ensures its ongoing progression, and by a counterfeit perception of stasis.

The interplay of impetus and resistance across one or more differentials is essential to maintaining the semiotic current, and as long as experience can be accommodated in each subsequent organizational domain or can bring about the expedient reanalysis of the structure that obstructs its accommodation, then the

perception that meaning and identity are more or less stable will remain largely intact. At the same time, however, there is an inevitable possibility that this interplay of impetus and resistance could *attenuate* the accommodation of experience, thereby obstructing to some degree the semiotic current. An obstruction of the semiotic current can disrupt the perception that meaning is static and stable (i.e., correlate with an accessible external reality) by interjecting one or more competing cognitive apprehensions of "reality." This disruption may occur in a number of ways, each characteristic of the behavior of a current that has been obstructed. It may be retained at the threshold of a differential, creating a gap between what has been experienced and what can be expressed in the terms of language. It may, by exerting consistent pressure on the structure of subsequent domains, bring about their reanalysis so that new terms and categories emerge with which to describe an experience. Finally, failing that, it may form an alternate, diverted, semiotic current; the basis for what has been described as the doubling of the trauma victim's identity, and which is evidenced by the existence of competing narrative realities.

We saw a disruption of this last sort in the film *The Others*, in which conflicting interpretations of the narrative make it impossible for the viewer to assign an unambiguous meaning to events in the narrative (see 2.0.1). Rather, the viewer is forced to maintain simultaneous and competing narrative versions, which nonetheless arose from the same narrative experience both concurrently (i.e., Grace and Ann's conflicting perceptions of reality presented to the viewer without one being privileged as correct), or consecutively (i.e., the serial reanalysis of "reality" by the viewer). By observing both the successful functioning of the process of signification and specifically, the manifold

disruptions to which it is prone in traumatic crisis, it becomes possible to specify a number of specific points of vulnerability where a differential exists at the thresholds between the various *functional domains* within the system.[6]

Functional domains are not delimited by hard boundaries, nor do they represent discrete, noncontiguous entities but instead, flow one into the other. The divisions that must be imposed in order to distinguish between them are determined by the manner in which each domain shapes and organizes the current of experience that passes through them – in other words, the observable characteristics of that current. These domains do not hold experience in a specific static form, nor do they manifest a unique *variant* of an objective reality in concatenation with variants held in preceding and subsequent domains. Rather, as I have suggested, the succession of domains forms a circuitous channel that both guides and shapes the current of signification, while at the same time being altered and shaped by that current.

What is essential is the way in which this current of experience *behaves* in relation to any given domain, and the capacity of the subsequent domain to continue its transmission. Our focus, then, will be on the current of experience itself, the way in which that current is shaped and constrained by the domains through which it passes (i.e., the terms and the logical relations that govern these), and the ways in which the domain itself may be altered by that current. Thus, while we may examine the terms and governing logic of each *specific* domain, the kind of subjectivity that each engenders, and

[6] Since functional domains are determined by convention alone, based on the characteristics of the system taken as observables, I will not rely primarily on those domains defined by Lacan, Kristeva, or by other theorists.

the objective that each domain fulfills (all are *kinds* of differentials), the ultimate purpose of this examination will be to describe the behavior of the current *as a whole*.

The influx on new experience provides the initial impetus that drives signification. As experience is passed through a succession of domains, each domain introduces new organizational or structural elements, while at the same time eliminating elements that had previously been available. The structural and organizational differences between each functional domain set up a degree of tension that is constantly maintained throughout the flow of signification (i.e., a differential). In terms of a domain's intrinsic structure, that tension may appear to represent a conflict or, in the case of traumatic crisis, may even be experienced as such. If we take an extrinsic view, however, we will see that this same tension that is *experienced* as conflict is actually a part of the requisite differential that drives the process of signification by compelling the ongoing reanalysis of each domain's structure.

The objective of this ongoing reanalysis is to better accommodate the influx of new experience while at the same time *minimizing* the degree of tension that is to be maintained. Signification, in other words, like any dynamic process, moves towards its own entopic demise by seeking equilibrium – in this case, an equilibrium in which experience matches the cognitive apprehension of that experience (meaning), cognitive apprehension matches communicative expression, and communicative expression matches the receptive comprehension of other individuals as though each referenced the same objective reality. Concurrently, the influx of new experience coupled with intrinsic and irresolvable differences both in the structure and in the objectives of each domain

ensure that this equilibrium is never reached. This assurance that there will always be conflict within both meaning and identity is what guarantees that subjectivity will continue to exist, since subjectivity, as I posit here, is in the *movement* of the semiotic current, not in the *stasis* of its expression in the functional domains.

The specific behavior of the semiotic current is determined by the interplay of force and counterforce (impetus and resistance) across differentials established between various domains. These differentials themselves are derived from the organization and function of each domain, which differ in terms of the kind of logical terms it utilizes, the kind of subjectivity and objectifications (if any) it evokes, the way in which that domain is "known," and the agency (individual or collective) that generates its terms and governing relations. I will explain each of these defining characteristics in the sections that follow, and I will outline the precise function and organization of each of five domains: the *Epistemic domain*, the *Ethical domain*, the *Idiolectic domain*, the *Narrative domain*, and the *Communicative domain*. By understanding role that each of these domains plays in signification, we can begin to see how trauma, while *experienced* as a crisis or breakdown, is nonetheless a mark and guarantor of the system's successful functioning.

2.3 The Epistemic domain

In my discussion the film *The Others*, I suggested that Grace's repression of traumatic events is not monolithic, but rather, it is characterized by a sequence of barriers that, when breeched, lead to a graduated awareness of those events via a serial revision of

her perceptions of "reality." Sensory experience constitutes our initial contact with the world, and hence, with traumatic phenomena or experience. Accordingly, the first barrier to awareness that Grace must challenge is sensory perception. In her assiduous exclusion of death in any form, Grace initially fails to see the "ghosts" in her home, while at the same time, she prohibits any discussion of them. In so doing, Grace effectively bans or is protected from any *sensory experience*, whether visual or auditory, that could initiate an awareness that these "ghosts'" exist. She only begins to confront their presence in her home and permit discussion of that presence after she has *seen* Ann's drawings of the ghostly entities, accompanied by a figure representing the number of times each has appeared to her.

Grace's defensive behavior, in particular of prohibiting discussion of the ghosts, would be called *avoidance* in clinical terms. Avoidance constitutes a defensive mechanism used to deal with traumatic crisis, by which the traumatized individual seeks to eliminate or avoid sensory input that can trigger unwanted (e.g., traumatic) recollection or awareness (see 1.0.2). At the same time, one of the key characteristics of traumatic crisis is the intrusion of somatosensory experience or even the complete physical reenactment of traumatic experience without any accompanying symbolized interpretation. (See Janet's explanation of *traumatic* versus *narrative* memory, section 1.0). This brings us to the first of the organizational domains that I will define here; the *Epistemic domain*.[7]

[7] The names of these five organizational domains are derived from the function and/or organization of the domain in question. My usage of these terms is specific to the model of cognitive functioning and subjectivity that I am developing here. The term 'epistemic' refers to the way in which the domain is known, which is to say, it is not structured using discrete, symbolic terms and relations, nor is it held at a

The Epistemic domain is a *somatosensory* domain, meaning that its input is comprised of neural impulses generated in the afferent nerves and receptors of the body. Put more simply, the contents of the Epistemic are derived from what we see, hear, taste, smell and feel *with* our bodies or *within* our bodies. Although we popularly consider these impulses to represent an experience of "objects" belonging to an external reality (see 1.1.1), this is not truly the case. Even at a neurobiological level, the Kantian assertion that we cannot attain the thing-in-itself holds true, since every quality of the "object" as we perceive it is created and structured by our own network of receptors, neural pathways, and regions of the brain associated with sensory processing (Lakoff & Johnson, *Philosophy* 25). [8] Sensory and somatic impulses constitute nothing more than an individual's experience *of her own body*, and therefore they represent only a nascent experience of *subjectivity* or the subject-in-itself.

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reflective distance from the consciousness that apprehends it. This usage if the term *epistemic* should not be confused with Foucault's notion of the *episteme.* In *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, Foucault writes: "By *episteme*, we mean, in fact, the total set of relations that unite, at a given period, the discursive practices that give rise to the epistemological figures, sciences, and possibly formalized systems […]. The episteme is not a form of knowledge (*connaissance*) or type of rationality which, crossing the boundaries of the most varied sciences, manifests the sovereign unity of a subject, a spirit, or a period; it is the totality of relations that can be discovered, for a given period, between the sciences when one analyses them at the level of discursive regularities." Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1972) 191. This definition is much closer to what Thomas Kuhn defined as the *paradigm.* See (Kuhn 38-39).

[8] Something *does* exist beyond this perceptive network, however our *perception* is restricted to our own sensory excitations, and our cognitive interpretation of those senses. Any other "apprehension" of what is external to us can exist at the level of theory alone, which since such a theoretical construct would be metaphysical and thus, a product of cognition, with no greater access to an external "reality." The unavailability of an external, objective "reality" does not justify a regression into radical scepticism, however, since, as this chapter will show, the subject, its apprehension of "reality," and the basis upon which shared meaning is founded is not *dependant* upon on an experience of "things-in-themselves." Instead, what will prove essential is the fact that the subject and "meaning" are formed by a system that functions as though there *were* an accessible objective reality while it simultaneously masks differences that could destroy this pragmatic functioning.

Although the objects that exist beyond an individual's own neural impulses remain essentially unknown to her, this does not prevent the use of sensory perceptions as a surrogate for those unavailable "objects." Somatosensory impulses and the sensory perceptions they generate are available to stand in for the thing-in-itself since those impulses cannot be reduced to anything beyond themselves in unmediated human experience. The biological exigencies of the human body enhance the perception of a stable external "reality" by providing us with what we presume is a similar basis for each individual's apprehension of reality. Nevertheless, while the fact that we each share more or less the same gross anatomical physiognomy and biological function enables us to conflate perception with an external reality, the capacities and limitations of our biologically based perceptions *contribute* to the structure of experience in the Epistemic, but do not actually define it. This first organizational domain is *shaped* by the influx of somatosensory impulses, and is shaped in a way that is unique to the experiences of the individual. Even at this most basic level, each individual's semiotic current is characterized by the singularity of her own personal experiences, the environment in which she finds herself, and the experience to which she is exposed.

The Epistemic is a metaphysically conceived domain that circumscribes experience generated by somatosensory impulses. I distinguish this Epistemic experience from the impulses themselves, which are limited to transient neural excitations. The contents of the Epistemic domain, in contrast to somatosensory impulses, are cognitively structured, although they *precede* the scope of symbolized meaning and thus are not structured in the same way as symbolized experience (what is commonly referred to as

"meaning"). Instead, they encompass some of what Lakoff and Johnston identify as cognitive processes that precede rational cognition (Lakoff & Johnson, *Philosophy* 10-12). This is not to say that the pre-symbolic contents of the Epistemic do not form an integral part of meaning, however they also remain beyond the structures and operations of *rational cognition*. Rational cognition, as we will see, arises in domains further along in the circuitous route that guides the current of signification, and requires discretely posited symbolized terms that are held at a *reflective distance* from the subjectivity that examines them.

The Epistemic exerts an indirect influence on symbolic meaning and rational cognition by integrating sensory impulses into a spatial awareness of the body and by extension, a spatial awareness of the environment surrounding that body (Lakoff & Johnson, *Philosophy* 30-36). The Epistemic is organized according to a *spatial* logic, which holds all instances of sensory experience within a structural unity and in a spatial relationship with one another. Our awareness of the body at the level of the Epistemic is an awareness of a *single* body in which various *sites* of sensory perception contribute to experience as a whole. Thetically posited "objects" do not yet exist within the spatial integration of that domain, and therefore sensory perception is not processed as a *subject's* perceptions of the qualities belonging to external objects. At the level of the Epistemic, as in Kristeva's semiotic, distinctions between the senses and the specific

perceptions they evoke are mapped to the specific *site* in the (unified) body where the perception is perceived to have originated.[9]

Spatial awareness in the Epistemic specifies *where* sensory experience is perceived to have arisen in the body. It is essential to note, however, that the spatial logic that orders this awareness cannot be correlated with later symbolized spatial relations. Spatial relations as they are later structured in symbolized and rational domains use a propositional logic to define something as *here* (*not there*). Spatial logic in the Epistemic, on the other hand, is neither comparative, nor does it yield a truth-value; it simply orients the contents of the Epistemic within the organic unity of the body. The Epistemic domain lacks the propositional terms of predicate logic, and therefore it also lacks those logical relationships that are dependant upon such terms, including temporality, causality, comparison, and serial ordering. These modes of ordering only become available once experience has been fragmented into discrete, noncontiguous terms. As a result, although the Epistemic is *shaped* by the influx of new experience, which may add to or alter the placement of instances within its spatial organization, it also lacks the evaluative operators needed to judge an experience to be incommensurate and to eliminate it.[10] The

[9] The "objects" themselves do not yet exist at this level of subjectivity, although the unity of the body will later contribute to the formation of what is external to the subject (i.e., what does not conform to the homologous unity of the "body"). Likewise, that unity will found the resistance to notions of intrinsically generated sensation. Experiences of this sort, such as psychosomatic sensations or disruptions (hysteria) will therefore be invalidated due to the failure of the other senses to corroborate the authenticity of that sensation.

[10] The question as to whether memory at this pre-narrative level constitutes an indissoluble account of all experience, or whether it, too, is subject to "memory loss" is not a primary concern here. What is critical to an understanding of "traumatic memory" is the fact this "corporeal" memory is structured differently than symbolized, narrative memory. The fact that the Epistemic is not vulnerable to the same conflicts and evaluative terms engendered by propositional logic means that it is not compelled to eliminate or restrict those conflicts, and this permits the Epistemic domain to retain aspects of experience that later organizational structures may prohibit.

Epistemic, in other words, is cumulative and integrative, retaining experience that may fail to find accommodation in later domains that are governed by predicate terms. Being thus cumulative, experience may continue to challenge the contents and structure of subsequent domains, since experience that is retained in the Epistemic constitutes a latent impetus in the semiotic current, the force of which has not been dissipated.[11]

Evidence for the retention of experience in a somatosensory domain of organization within an integrated spatial logic is offered by traumatic crisis itself; in what Janet termed *traumatic memory.* As outlined in the previous chapter, traumatic memory serves as a repository for experience which "may not easily fit into existing cognitive schemes and either may be remembered with particular vividness or may totally resist integration" if they are frightening or novel (van der Kolk, *Intrusive* 160). Such memories, which emerge either dissociated from the cognitive processes of narrative memory or in behavioral reenactments, are characterized by two things. On the one hand, traumatic memory exists side by side with symptoms of anamnesis; an inability to tell the story of the traumatic experience, indicating that that experience as yet has failed to be processed using symbolic terms and logical relations governed by predicate operators (van der Kolk, *Intrusive* 162). At the same time, such memory is retained in somatic form, triggered by physical circumstances or sensory input (van der Kolk, *Intrusive* 163). The existence of traumatic memory makes evident the fact that somatic experience must be stored independently of volitional mechanisms of remembering, and in a form that is unavailable to the logical terms of rational evaluation.

[11] This accords with Kristeva's *semiotic*, but also with Janet's notion of *traumatic memory*, which precedes the structure of the cognitive schemata, language, and accordingly, *narrative memory*.

As previously stated, functional domains such as the Epistemic designate contiguous segments of an uninterrupted channel through which experience passes as a current. These domains, which shape and structure that experience, can be delineated within that contiguous channel on the basis of observable characteristics. In the case of the Epistemic, these characteristics include the domain's lack of "objects" or "subject" (i.e., objectified, symbolized experience), the unity of its subjectivity (the Epistemic can be said to possess *only* subjectivity) and its organization using an integrated spatial logic. I draw here on a distinction between the *subject* and *subjectivity*, and this distinction will play an important role in the model being developed here. In using the term *subjectivity*, I mean to specify that current of experience responsible for the mechanizations of cognition, beginning here with the integration of experience with in the spatial logic of bodily awareness, but including all subsequent domains as well. Subjectivity, in other words, comprises the intelligence that orders cognition and that apprehends it. I will use the term *subject*, by contrast, to designate that symbolized entity that represents the individual, but which, as we will see, is more accurately termed an *objectification* of subjectivity or subjective identity. I will return to this notion and will explain it more thoroughly below.

The limitations of somatosensory experience determine what is passed *to* the Epistemic domain, and the limitations of somatosensory processing govern and delimit the ways in which that experience is ordered and retained. As experience is structured within the Epistemic, it must then be passed to the subsequent domains, and the capacity of the domains that follow to accommodate that current will determine that current's

behavior. Recalling the behavior of an impetus in any dynamic system, we can expect a short set of possible outcomes for any given experiential impetus. It may be readily accommodated, being passed from domain to domain without substantial impedance such that no disruption to the semiotic current occurs. Failing to find accommodation or finding only incomplete accommodation, however, that impetus may bypass, alter, or destroy what impedes it, or (if it is a weak impulse) it may remain latent in the Epistemic domain possibly to kindle later disruption. (I will return to these specific outcomes vis-à-vis the Epistemic in later sections of this chapter.)

Without immediately detailing the characteristics of the domain that follows, it is already possible to pinpoint certain vulnerabilities endemic to the Epistemic domain. As long as the impetus from the Epistemic can be readily accommodated by existing structures in subsequent domains, experience will flow unimpeded from sensory perception to the Epistemic's spatial mapping of the body. Even if an experiential impetus should *fail* to find immediate accommodation however, the tension it generates will not necessarily lead to a sustained cognitive dissonance or disruption if it is able to impel a satisfactory reanalysis of structures in the subsequent domain so that the impulse can be accommodated. Cognitive dissonance that results in a positive reanalysis is manifested as the interjection of spatial awareness (concrete or abstract); i.e., pattern recognition, the sudden realization of connections, etc. Accompanying that successful reanalysis and resulting new awareness is a release that of tension that was created by the imperfect (or fully impeded) passage of impetus into the subsequent domain. That release

of tension, as first Freud, then Lacan described it, is experienced by the individual as a discharge of "affective" tension – the "Aha-Erlebnis" or "Aha-Experience.

In other instances, an impetus may be obstructed and simultaneously fail to bring about the satisfactory reanalysis of structure in the subsequent domain. If an impetus is *not* satisfactorily accommodated either by existing logical structures (whether of an integrated, spatial logic, predicate logic, etc.) or through the reanalysis of those structures, then the force of that impetus will either remain at the threshold of that differential as persistent, latent tension, or may seek to bypass systemic resistance by forming an alternate channel. Here at the threshold passing from the Epistemic into the domain that follows, impetus that is thus held or diverted gives rise to somatic symptoms or phenomena. Somatic symptoms that are commonly associated with traumatic crisis include: minor somatic disturbances (headache, tension, unexplained pains, gastrointestinal disturbance); hysterical symptoms (conversion reaction, paralysis, etc.); psycho-neural phenomena (seizures brought on by the "kindling" of neural impulses); fugue states (autonomic gestures, traumatic reenactment); and the complex symptoms of *Somatization Disorder* – the first of what Herman identifies as three graduated dissociative disorders (Herman, *Trauma* 122-126). These symptoms can be logically grouped together as arising in the Epistemic since they share a single, critical feature: they are expressed somatically (rather than symbolically) within the unity of the body, and without reference to a causative entity – i.e., an object.

Thus far, I have specified three elements that characterized the Epistemic – the lack of objectifications, the unity of subjectivity, and the use of an integrated spatial

logic. These three observable characteristics will form a basis for the kinds of differentials that exist between organizational domains, but are not the only kinds. The way in which the contents of each domain are "known" and the kind of subjectivity the domain evokes also play a critical role in the dynamic process of signification. Since subjectivity in the Epistemic arises in a flow of experience that has yet to be fragmented into the symbolized terms of "meaning," and since that experience originates not with an experience of any thing-in-itself, but with the individual's own sensory experience, subjectivity in the Epistemic domain is best understood as a unified experience of the *subject-in-itself*. The Epistemic domain, in other words, possesses subjectivity and *only* subjectivity, since it precedes the fragmentation that gives rise to objectifications. That subjectivity, as the name suggests, possesses an *epistemic* knowledge of that domain. It is, in other words, a *pre-thetic* and *doxic* subjectivity, rather than *protodoxic* (preceding the cogito).

In utilizing the term 'epistemic,' I am drawing on a philosophical distinction between *epistemic awareness* and *epistemological awareness*.[12] *Epistemic awareness* is awareness that is itself structured in a particular cohesive order (in this instance, an integrated spatial logic), and apprehended by a cognitive apparatus that is defined *within* that structure. Epistemic awareness is non-reflective, since the agent that *knows* cannot

[12] Standard usage of the terms 'epistemic' and 'epistemological' differ from the manner in which I use them here. In standard usage, the term epistemic is an adjective that simply means something that pertains to knowing or knowledge. The term, 'epistemological,' is defined as something that pertains to the study of knowledge. I use these terms in reference to the *manner in which something is known*, whereby epistemic refers to something that is known without an awareness of its innate structure (i.e., non-reflective awareness), and epistemological refers to something that is known *including* its innate structure (i.e., reflective awareness in which the relationship between things that are known are also included in this awareness).

separate itself from that *knowledge itself* in order to examine both the terms of that knowledge, and the logical relations that structure it. The capacity to comprehend both what is known *and* the way in which it is organized demands a subjectivity that is thetic (post-Oedipal) and doxic, since such *reflective* awareness presupposes a separation of the "knower" from what is known. Reflective awareness is more properly termed an *epistemological awareness* – that is, a knowledge of both the terms *and* the logical relations that govern them. This epistemological awareness requires that the subject who "knows" be defined and structured in a domain that is separate and distinct from that which is known in order that the subject may *reflect* on it. Specific aspects of that reflection, in other words, would be epistemic (i.e., intrinsic to the operation of reflection) while other aspects would be epistemological (extrinsic, as the object of reflection). This requirement of a subjectivity separate from and reflecting upon what is known is fulfilled in later domains and is the foundation of cognitive awareness and rational thought.

This distinction between epistemic and epistemological awareness will form a critical differential in the semiotic system. Since subjectivity structured in the Epistemic domain does not hold the contents of the domain in which it arises at a reflective distance, it cannot be said to possess an epistemological awareness of its own domain. Its epistemic knowledge of experience is expressed within the terms of its own spatial logic, while the cognitive processes that structure and restructure it remain beneath that threshold of rational (i.e., reflective) awareness. As a result, when an impetus is blocked from passing out of the Epistemic, causing an overflow in that domain, that overflow is

perceived or interpreted as *irrational* in the sense that this overflow precedes *rational* (i.e., reflective) cognitionand the ability to reflect rationally on the crisis of that overflow.

As stated, disruption in the Epistemic emerges as somatic disruption that is outside the propositional logic that governs reflective awareness and cognition. The fact that the Epistemic's internal, spatial logic is unavailable to rational cognition helps to strengthen its influence on symbolic "meaning," which, as we will see, must be balanced between the specific perceptions and experience of the individual, and the generalized and collective perceptions of society. The inertia of collectively defined meaning is countered, in other words, by the irreducible nature of somatosensory experience held in the Epistemic, and the authority of each must be balanced in the formation of symbolized meaning. The responsibility for maintaining that difficult balance and for establishing the thetic structure of symbolic meaning will fall to the *Ethical domain*, which follows as the next domain in the circuitous channel of signification.

Differential	Epistemic domain
Logical Terms	Integrated, spatial logic (mapping)
Subjectivity	Subject-in-itself
Objectifications	None
Manner of "awareness"	Epistemic awareness

Table 1: Characteristics of differentials manifested in Epistemic domain (partial list)

2.4 The Ethical domain and Epistemic Crisis

The subjectivity that is evoked in the Epistemic domain fulfills the objectives both of integrating somatosensory impulses into a unified, sensory experience of the body, and

of generating spatial awareness. From this organic unity, the experiential impetus shaped within the Epistemic domain is passed into what I here define as the *Ethical domain*.[13] In the Ethical domain, sensory experience is *divided* into the sensations perceived to be endemic to the body (i.e., the one who experiences), and externally posited characteristics of the "object" (what is experienced). The experience of both the "subject" and the "object" must be generated from the *same* set of sensory impulses, since our initial experience of the world around us is comprised of sensory impulses of some kind. It is here in the Ethical domain that subjective experience is first divided into the precursors of subject and its objects.

The internal logic of the Ethical domain achieves this requisite splitting of sensory perception by distinguishing what is *inside* self, and what is *outside* self. Unlike the spatial logic of the Epistemic, this dualistic relationship expresses a rudimentary propositional logic and can be evaluated in terms of a truth-value: inside ≠ outside, or Self ≠ Other. What is *inside*, in other words, cannot be *outside*, and what is *outside* cannot possibly belong to the inside of Self. Subjectivity structured in the Ethical domain possesses an *epistemic* awareness of the domain in which it exists (i.e., the logical distinction of inside/outside) since like subjectivity structured in the Epistemic, subjectivity structured in the Ethical is evoked within the logical structure of its own

[13] Again, the term *Ethical domain* is intended to evoke the special functioning of this particular organizational domain. I have chosen to use the term 'ethical,' since, as I will explain, the basis of ethical outrage (the experience of ethical violation) originates with overflow in this domain. This understanding of 'ethics' differs markedly from notions of prescriptive ethics, and perhaps accords most closely with the notion of ethical relativism (i.e., ethical norms are the product of our cultural and social milieu) and of secular ethical notions as developed by Thomas Hobbes and John Locke. Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan* (Berlin: Luchterhand, 1966). John Locke, *Two Treatises on Civil Government* (New York: E. P. Dutton and co. 1884).

domain. This epistemic awareness is the *foundation* of symbolic meaning and logic, and is fundamental to the development of cognitive reason, since it is this subjectivity in the Ethical domain that will reflect, with an epistemological awareness, upon the fully symbolized domain that follows the Ethical domain. In the domain in which it resides, however, that subjectivity is restricted to an epistemic, non-reflective awareness and therefore cannot rationally evaluate its own *inside/outside* dialectic in order to assess its relative validity.

The distinction of *inside* from *outside* is the only propositional argument available within the Ethical domain itself and this initial distinction (a protean logic) is the prerequisite of symbolic logic. As other terms of prepositional logic become available in subsequent domains, the inside/outside opposition will be replaced by an ordering principle of *either/or*. This can only occur, however, once a reflective distance has been established from which subjectivity may regard both "subject" and its "objects" as like ontological entities that can legitimately be compared with one another. Only in this way can awareness of oneself arise as a *part* of the field of meaning and symbolized entities. Both subject and its objects, in other words, must be *objectified* and thereby declared outside of the subject-in-itself (i.e., its epistemic awareness of its own structure) in order for the full range of logical relations to become available for analysis with the positing of a full symbolic domain of organization. Experience that has been first ordered within a somatospatial unity in the Epistemic, and then ordered within a distinction of

inside/outside, will subsequently be passed to a domain, where that experience will be articulated in fully symbolic terms that are governed by predicate logic.[14]

The Ethical domain differs from the Epistemic in its governing logic (a protean predicate logic, as opposed to an integrated spatial logic) and in the fact that the Ethical has generated an Other opposed to Self, out of which distinction the subject's "objects" will emerge. The Ethical is *like* the Epistemic, however, in that *both* possess a "true" subjectivity – that is, a subject that experiences itself rather than reflects upon itself as a symbolized entity. Like the Epistemic as well, when experiential impetus in the Ethical fails to find accommodation in a subsequent domain, the resulting overflow is perceived as irrational, although that crisis is manifested differently than the crisis that occurs in the Epistemic. In the Epistemic domain, an overflow of the semiotic current that occurs when experience cannot be passed to the next domain – the Ethical – manifests itself as somatic or psychomotor symptoms. These somatic manifestations of crisis do not appear to relate to subjectivity and signification in any way, since they are expressed in the somatosensory impulses and integrated spatial logic of that domain. That overflow *precedes* the *inside/outside* division of the Ethical domain, and therefore it tends to be

[14] Subjectivity evoked within the Ethical domain is strictly limited to a non-reflective recognition of what is self, derived from the corporeal unity that it references in the Epistemic. By defining what is homologous to the body in its rhythms and dispositions, certain experiences in the Epistemic can be construed as consistent in their appearance, and hence more central to the body's own functioning (i.e., autonomic functions such as respiration or digestion. Experiences that do not arise as regularly or with such predictability are situated further in the periphery of familiar sensation and function. Thus, while the "objects" themselves do not yet exist in either the Epistemic or the Ethical domain, spatial unity of the Epistemic helps to determine what will be regarded as inside or outside of subjectivity in the Ethical. The close bond between Epistemic and Ethical generates considerable resistance against sensations that arise in the body itself, but that are not intrinsic to its homologous unity. These kinds of experiences, which include psychosomatic sensations or disruptions (hysteria, phantom pains) tend to be invalidated on the basis of their eccentricity to prior experience, in particular when other senses fail to corroborate an external basis for that sensation.

ascribed to a pathological process within the body – at least until it is determined that such corporeal manifestations cannot be traced to a somatic etiology.

An overflow of the semiotic current in the Ethical domain occurs when experience cannot be passed from the Ethical domain to a symbolized domain (*Idiolect* or a *Narrative domain*). The crises that such overflow generates appear to emerge from the most profound depths of meaning and subjectivity – in the distinction between what constitutes an individual's self, and what constitutes the world around her. Crises arising in the Ethical domain are irrational not because they are without meaning, but because they relate to meaning in a way that cannot be comprehended using cognitive reason. Just as in the Epistemic domain, crisis in the Ethical domain is irrational in that it is epistemic, and therefore it cannot be examined from a reflective distance in terms of its intrinsic logic. Simply put, these crises lack the reflective distance needed for an *epistemological* awareness of them.

The manner of crises engendered when the semiotic current in any given domain is disrupted will be determined by the structure of the domain in which that overflow of impetus occurs. Epistemic overflow will be manifested somatically; Ethical overflow will be manifested as a profound disruption to the core of identity, while overflow in later domains will take other forms specific to the intrinsic structure of the domain in question. At the same time, multiple symptomatic disruptions (i.e., disruptions to somatic functioning, identity, cognitive reasoning, social interaction, etc.) may occur simultaneously since the obstruction of current in any domain has the capacity to disrupt current in all domains. The current, in other words, is a unity and behaves as such, with

the flow of current in each functional domain dependant upon the flow in all others. The obstruction of the semiotic current as it attempts to pass from the Ethical into the domain that follows may very well lead to disruption in the Epistemic, as well as disruption in subsequent domains where experience that is impeded fails to be manifested.

The impedance and overflow of impetus in the Ethical domain creates an *epistemic* crisis, as does overflow on the Epistemic, however that crisis is expressed and debated as a crisis of *ethics*. This is due to the fact that, while subjectivity in the Ethical domain is structured by the epistemic awareness of that domain, it is also the subjectivity that "reflects" upon *Idiolect* – the objectified and symbolized domain that follows the Ethical and that largely structures interpersonal communication. Since subjectivity structured in the Ethical is not indentured to Idiolect for its own internal structure, it holds Idiolect in an *epistemological* awareness and is able to evaluate both the terms of that symbolized knowledge, and the logical relations between those terms. The "rational" judgment that subjectivity in the Ethical levels at the terms and relations of Idiolect is nonetheless itself structured and driven by the epistemic awareness of its own *inside/outside* dialectic, and thus, in its own intrinsic capacity (or failure) to recognize the symbolized contents of idiolect as belonging to *self*. Thus, underlying rational judgment is a distinction that is extrinsic to symbolized meaning, but central to the structure and functioning of subjectivity in the Ethical.

This differs from the Epistemic domain. When experience cannot be parsed to the Ethical, the overflow in the Epistemic does not produce a crisis of reason, since the Epistemic is not a rational domain (i.e., structured using symbolized terms and a

predicate logic). That overflow is manifested as somatic disruption, symptoms and "pathology" that are not indentured to symbolized reason or identity in any way. In the case of the Ethical domain, an overflow of semiotic current generates instability in the distinction between Self and Other, thereby threatening the individual's sense of self with dissolution. This epistemic crisis, when coupled with the inability of symbolized meaning (held in a subsequent domain) to "rationally" account for that crisis, results in the failure to express that crisis in symbolized terms – i.e., in language.

Differential	Epistemic domain	Ethical domain
Logical Terms	Integrated, spatial logic (mapping)	Protean predicate logic: inside/outside
Subjectivity[15]	Subject-in-itself	Divided subjectivity – Self/Other
Objectifications[16]	None	Other as precursor to objectification
Manner of "awareness"	Epistemic awareness	Epistemic awareness of own domain. Reflective, epistemological awareness of Idiolect
Agency[17]	Single agency	Single agency

Table 2: Characteristics of differentials manifested in Epistemic and Ethical domain (partial list)

[15] As noted in the text, I use the term subjectivity to describe the current of experience, while I reserve the term 'subject' to refer to the objectified subject (i.e., "subject as object") that is contained in the symbolized terms of Idiolect.

[16] I use the term, 'objectification,' rather than 'object,' because the "object" actually comprises an aspect of subjectivity, unified at first, that is alienated when somatosensory experience (actually an experience of the subject-in-itself) is divided into the being who experiences (self), and that which is experienced (other). All 'objects' (i.e., symbolized entities constructed as correlates to real-world and ultimately unattainable objects) are constructed from this initial experience of subjectivity, and therefore represent "objectifications" of initial subjectivity.

[17] 'Agency' refers to the agent who formulates meaning in a given domain. In all domains preceding the Communicative domain, there is a single agency; that of the individual cognition. The Communicative domain differs in that it's symbolized "contents (i.e., the sum of social interaction by which "shared meaning" is created) is generated by as many agents as there are participants in a discursive community. In this way, the Communicative domain is constructed by a *collective agency*.

In the Ethical domain there is a *conjunction* of both epistemic crisis and ethical crisis. This conjunction can also be expressed as the conjunction of *epistemic* and *epistemological* crises since subjectivity in the ethical possesses both an epistemic awareness of the domain in which it is structured, and an epistemological awareness of the domain of symbolized meaning upon which it reflects. Rather than two separate crises, however, we will find that both the epistemic and the ethical (i.e., epistemological) derive from the *same* overflow of impetus in the Ethical domain, and yet appear to emerge as distinct from one another precisely because subjectivity in the Ethical domain possesses two distinct means of "knowing." In other words, that subjectivity possesses an epistemic awareness of that crisis and yet, in reflecting on the symbolized field of meaning established in the following domain, it reflects upon and expresses that crisis as a *crisis of ethics*.

Ethical discourse concerning trauma arises as the individual struggles to come to terms with the loss of boundary between Self and Other (a violation of meaning and identity that cannot be accounted for using terms and logical relations). That discourse, which typically centers on that which defines that which is "human" (i.e., the DSM-III definition of trauma) attempts to reform the Self/Other distinction by claiming as its point of origin an *arché* beyond the terms of symbolized and rational thought. In truth, the epistemic outrage experienced by the overflow of the semiotic current in the Ethical domain *does* originate from an *arché* beyond reason – non-reflective subjectivity structured in the Ethical domain. Ultimately the vehement outrage of ethical crisis derives from the fact that the crisis is *experienced* as an epistemic, and hence the 'speechless'

crisis of the Self overwhelmed by what has been perceived to be Other. The question as to whether trauma should be interpreted as an epistemic or an ethical crisis, a point of critical contention in trauma research, cannot be resolved in favor of one over the other, since each represents a separate awareness of the *same crisis*.

While subjectivity structured in the Epistemic domain manifests epistemic crisis as somatic experience, subjectivity in the Ethical domain manifests epistemic crisis as instability in the distinction between what belongs to self and what does *not* belong to self, i.e., Self and Other. This instability results when the critical integrity of the *inside/outside* opposition becomes instable. We can understand this instability by considering the position of the Ethical domain between the Epistemic (somatosensory) domain and the Idiolectic domain (symbolic terms and relations). As heterogeneous experience is passed from the Epistemic into the Ethical, and from the Ethical into Idiolect, the Ethical domain must *mediate* between both the preceding and the subsequent domain. (Each domain plays this kind of mediating role between the domains immediately preceding and following). The organization of the Epistemic, in particular its lack of evaluative logical operators and its resulting inability to *eliminate* experience, means that heterogeneous experience will be retained, and will continue to challenge the Ethical domain by demanding accommodation.

It is not feasible for the Ethical domain simply to alter its innate structure by reanalyzing the inside/outside distinction of Self and Other in order to alleviate the tension produced by heterogeneous experience held in the Epistemic. The semiotic current, once passed to and accommodated by the Ethical, must then be passed to and

accommodated by the symbolized terms and relations of Idiolect.[18] Resistance of the Idiolectic domain to heterodoxic experience arises from the fact that, as we will see, symbolic meaning is ultimately constrained by the need to communicate with others. Symbolized meaning, in other words, is generated both by the individual in response to personal experience, and by the discursive community (communities) of which she is a part. Meaning is generated by the *interaction* of the individual with that community. (I will examine Idiolect in greater detail in the next section of this chapter). Subjectivity in the Ethical domain is caught between the influx of the semiotic current from the Epistemic, which cannot be eliminated based on rational evaluation, and by the constraint on independent reanalysis of Idiolect by the individual, which is held in check by the imperative to maintain *shared symbolic meaning*. Individual sensory experience, in other words, does not have free reign to form our apprehension of reality. As a result of its placement between the biological exigencies of sensory perception, and the constraint on the formation of new meaning by the social imperative, the inside/outside distinction of Self and Other formed in the Ethical domain is particularly vulnerable to irresolvable tensions as a result of heterogeneous (i.e., traumatic) experience.

If the Ethical domain fails to accommodate the semiotic current passed from the Epistemic, an overflow will occur in the Epistemic domain. If it accommodates that

[18] I define the individual's apprehension of symbolized meaning as Idiolect. This does not differ substantially from Frege's original use of the term, which he defined as the sense attached to any symbolized expression by the individual (Frege 626). Where my concept of idiolect differs from the norm is in the fact that I will argue that no meaning exists apart from various, individual idiolects. There is no "perfect language" that exists outside of the personal apprehension of meaning, since no cognition extends to, and therefore holds the domain of social communication. Meaning that "exists" in the social domain exists by compact alone, since it is apprehended only in the social response that our own idiolect is adequate or inadequate (what I will define as the social "mirroring function").

current yet fails to pass it to Idiolect, however, then the Ethical domain is itself vulnerable to overflow. Vacillation or instability of this inside/outside distinction creates a degree of vulnerability that is not duplicated at any other threshold of differential in the current of signification. While an overflow of impetus in the Epistemic may produce somatic manifestations of experience (i.e., symptoms), the destabilizing effect is somewhat mitigated by the fact that those manifestations can often be explained as an invasion of the body by pathogens, thereby maintaining the integrity of subjective identity. In addition, in extreme instances it is even possible to invoke the frailty of the human organism itself by refusing to believe one's own senses. Overflow in the Ethical, however, threatens to eradicate the distinction between the "outside world" and the "subject," and therefore provokes an ontological crisis.

Predictably, when an impetus from the Ethical domain is unable to overcome the resistance of Idiolect, the overflow of that impetus elicits the so-called "primitive defenses," including denial, splitting, etc. These defenses, together with the loss or absence of a well-defined ego structure characterize another one of three dissociative traumatic disorders identified by Judith Herman – the Borderline Personality Disorder (Herman, *Trauma* 123-129). Accordingly, Herman characterizes the Borderline Personality Disorder (BPD) as the second in an escalating scale of dissociation, with Somatization Disorder comprising the first. The primary characteristics of the Borderline Personality Disorder include a reliance upon the so-called primitive defenses, most notably splitting (rigid separation of Self/Other boundary), and a near total absence of well defined ego boundaries (Herman, *Trauma* 122-126). The Borderline Personality

Disorder, in other words, is a disorder that primarily originates with instability in the distinction of Self and Other – the inside/outside dichotomy of the Ethical domain.

As with all disruption to the semiotic current, the precise manifestation of epistemic crisis in the Ethical domain depends upon the behavior of the impulse that is impeded. An extremely powerful impetus that fails to find accommodation in the system's established structures may simply destroy those structures. In all but the most extreme instances, however, that impetus will not create that level of damage. The impedance of a lesser impetus will simply hold that impetus as an "unresolved tension" (i.e., it will not be dissipated along the primary or an alternate channel). That "subliminal" tension may then be held at the threshold of the subsequent order until either protracted wear from that slight pressure, and/or the accumulation of repeated experience is successful in bringing about a reanalysis.

Likewise, if the force of an impetus is insufficient to immediately destroy the subsequent domain, and yet is too great to be held for any protracted period of time in the domain in which it originates, it may be diverted and establish an alternate channel of current that both competes with, and yet preserves the integrity of the primary channel. It is this formation of a competing channel that results in the vacillation of ego identity seen in patients with a Borderline Personality Disorder. In understanding this range of outcomes, it now becomes possible to situate both repression and dissociation within the systemic intercourse of force and counterforce. Specifically, repression can be equated with a domain's structurally based resistance (the stability of its "orthodoxy"), and dissociation with the diversion of the impetus that has thus been impeded along an

alternate, competing channel.[19] Systemic resistance of an organizational domain and the ensuing diversion of the semiotic current (its repression and subsequent dissociation) both occur at the threshold of each functional or organizational differential, and the form of the "crisis" is specific to the domain involved.

2.5 Idiolect and the Emergence of Epistemology

The organizational domain that follows the Ethical is the domain of *Idiolect*. Structurally, Idiolect differs from either the Epistemic or the Ethical domain in a number of critical ways. Experience that had been held in a relation of *inside/outside* (or as Self/Other) in the Ethical domain comes to be expressed in terms of an *either/or* relationship in Idiolect. Experience is articulated here using discrete and noncontiguous symbolized elements that are held in a comparative relationship to *every other element* in the domain's symbolic system. Idiolect is, in other words, a fully symbolic order and accordingly, the relations between the terms expressed there are governed by a fully propositional logic. The terms expressed in Idiolect cannot be merged with one another and still retain their identity, nor can they be separated from one another and retain the meaning that they derived from their relationship with those other elements. They are fixed in their metonymic limitations and their metaphoric relationships with one another.

[19] Van der Kolk suggests that the compatibility of dissociation and repression may lie in their belonging to separate models of the mind. "Repression reflects a vertically layered model of mind: what is repressed is pushed downward into the unconscious. […] Dissociation reflects a horizontally layered model of mind: when a subject does not remember a trauma, its 'memory' is contained in an alternate stream of consciousness, which may be subconscious or dominate consciousness, e.g., during traumatic reenactments" (van der Kolk, *Intrusive* 168). In fact, repression and dissociation describe two forces at work in a single model of mind. Repression refers to the arrest of the semiotic current, as impetus, by the impedance of the subsequent domain. Dissociation, on the other hand, refers to the lateral formation of a competing current by that constrained impetus.

Idiolect comprises the individual's apprehension of symbolized meaning and identity as it reflects what is assumed to be a valid external "reality" and world of objects. Experience that is passed to Idiolect is expressed in *objectified* form, which is to say that all experience comes to be expressed as some type of object. This includes the *subject* as well as those entities in the external world that we habitually recognize as objects. Here, we can begin to distinguish between subjectivity and the *subject.* Subjectivity, as I have stated, is best understood as the semiotic current itself, including all somatosensory experience, *both* what is recognized as Self and what is disavowed as Other, and in Idiolect, *all* objectifications (the subject *and* its objects). This might seem counterintuitive at first, however it must be remembered that both Self and Other, as well as all of the objectifications in Idiolect, are derived from the unified subject-in-itself instantiated by somatosensory experience.

In contrast to subjectivity, the Idiolectic *subject* represents an objectified category that includes those symbolized terms and relations perceived to correlate with Self in the Ethical domain. The Idiolectic subject is, in other words, an object that represents Self and that heads the set of objectifications and categories perceived to represent personal identity (i.e., one's own personal traits and qualities). That subject, essentially the subject-as-object, must be established as a like ontological entity with all other objectified entities in Idiolect in order for both the subject and its objects to be articulated within the comparative terms of the domain's propositional logic. At the same time, that symbolized subject references pre-symbolic Self, since under optimal circumstances, experience that has been structured as Self is passed to Idiolect as belonging to the

subject. Ricoeur addressed this distinction of subject and self with the terms *personal identity*, and *narrative identity* whereby narrative identity correlates with the grammatical 'I' that is underpinned by a self that transcends objectified grammatical categories (Ricoeur, *Oneself* 2).

Subjectivity that is expressed in the Ethical domain *reflects upon* the objectifications of *Idiolect* – that is, upon the subject and its objects – as well as upon the logical relations between these from an *epistemological distance*. While subjectivity in the Ethical domain is endemic to the inside/outside dialectic of the Ethical domain and hence possesses an epistemic awareness of that dialectic, that subjectivity regards the symbolized expression of its own "identity," and the "identity" of what is other (either/or) from a reflective distance. It is this distance that establishes the basis for an epistemological awareness of the contents of Idiolect. I use the term "reflection" here not in the sense of a psychologized process. The "reflection" of that subjectivity upon Idiolect constitutes the process by which that subjectivity *experiences* the adequacy or inadequacy of Idiolect's symbolic expressions to accommodate experience as it has been structured in the Ethical domain. The process of evaluation need not be carried out by a sovereign or transcendent will, but instead, is accounted for by an interplay of tension (impedance, impetus, and subsequent overflow) and the resolution of that tension (the dissipation of impetus overflow) experienced in the Ethical domain. The process of "reflection" is endemic to the behaviour of the semiotic current.[20]

[20] Like the relationship of the Ethical domain to Idiolect, the Epistemic domain precedes the Ethical domain. Subjectivity structured in the Epistemic domain cannot possess an epistemological awareness of the Ethical domain, however, since it is governed by an integrated, spatial logic. It lacks an evaluative,

The coexistence of both epistemic and epistemological awareness at the level of subjectivity in the Ethical domain *bifurcates* the crisis experienced by that subjectivity when the semiotic current cannot be passed from the Ethical domain to the domain of Idiolect. As suggested in the previous section, the Ethical domain passes what is Self and what is Other to Idiolect where each are fully symbolized. Since all entities that are articulated in Idiolect are *objectified* entities, they can be subject to the full range of terms and operations associated with propositional logic, through which they are evaluated in terms of their *truth-value*. If the terms and relations of Idiolect cannot adequately articulate the distinction between what is Self and what is Other, then an overflow in the Ethical domain results. The distinction between Self and Other becomes unstable, resulting in the decentering of subjectivity. This distinction is not held at a reflective distance and it cannot be examined logically and therefore constitutes an epistemic crisis. In its epistemological awareness of Idiolect, however, that subjectivity reflects upon that same overflow and resulting crisis as a crisis of *meaning*.

When instability in the Self/Other dichotomy of the Ethical domain occurs, it pits the all-inclusive retention of somatosensory experience against the need to form an Idiolectic apprehension of symbolized meaning that more or less conforms with the social apprehension of meaning. The individual must either disbelieve the experiences of the senses, or she must acknowledge the fact that the terms and relations of symbolized meaning in Idiolect do not represent her experience and alter those terms and relations accordingly. At the same time, in altering those terms and relations, the individual begins

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truth-value based logic (i.e., a predicate logic) such as the protean predicate logic of the Ethical domain needed for epistemological awareness.

to dissolve the linguistic bond shared with others in her social milieu – a bond that relies on the perception that symbolized meaning is *shared* by all members of the social entity in approximately the same form because that meaning derives from a single shared and perceivable "reality." This placement between somatosensory experience (the Epistemic) and the individual's *apprehension* of shared signification (her Idiolect) makes subjectivity structured in the Ethical domain particularly vulnerable to crisis.

Both Lacan and Kristeva address the instability of the inside/outside distinction of Self and Other with their theories of *desire* (Lacan) and *abjection* (Kristeva).[21] The inability to pass what is structured as *inside* within the Ethical domain (Self) into Idiolect as "subject," creates a tension that is expressed as desire of the (lost) object. Likewise, that "object" may be reclaimed if Idiolect is modified to associate that "object" with subjectivity, leading to a subsequent dissipation of tension and an experience of the sublime (i.e., *jouissance* –the dissolution of separation, which is perceived as the satisfaction of desire). The inability to pass what is structured as *outside* in the Ethical domain (Other) to an "object" in Idiolect threatens to return this alienated aspect of subjectivity to Self, and creates a tension that is expressed as the contamination of that subjectivity through what is Other or *abjected* from Self. Ultimately, both abjection and desire arise from the same systemic instability in the division of Self from Other (and subsequently, of subject from its objects) – a division that has been imposed upon what originated as wholly subject-in-itself. The result is that unified subjectivity demands the

[21] See Lacan, *Feminine* 116-121. Julia Kristeva, *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*, trans. Leon S. Roudiez (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982) 6-7.

return of what was dissociated from itself, while the construct of Self is simultaneously threatened with inundation by that return.

Whether experienced as desire or as abjection, the vacillation or instability that epistemic crisis brings to subjectivity in the Ethical domain generates a condition of *alexithymia* in which there is an awareness that objectifying language is inadequate both to invoke the totality of subjectivity, and at the same time, to ban what must be separated from that totality in order that language may exist and communication may occur (see 1.2.1). Symbolized meaning, in other words, is created, maintained, and annulled in the tension of bereavement and engulfment, and the fear of loss (desire) and of being overwhelmed (abjection), which characterize the epistemic crisis of subjectivity in the Ethical domain. Just as overflow in the Epistemic is capable of producing varying degrees of somatic disruption, so too overflow in the Ethical may be expressed as an entire range of manifestations. Those manifestations include phobia (abjection), anxiety disorders, with borderline personality disorder – the core characteristics of which are the instability of the ego and a concomitant fear of abandonment and engulfment – perhaps forming the extreme end of that range.

As experience is passed to Idiolect, it faces the restrictive quality of its own symbolized structure that derives from the combined opposition of its parts and their evaluation according to predicated truth-values. This restrictive or conservative quality – a *structural* or *systemic* inertia –acts to bar heterogeneous experience from symbolized meaning in a manner that correlates with Janet's theory of dissociation – that is, passively, on the basis of systemic incompatibility. Janet's theory of dissociation

addresses traumatic crisis by taking an extrinsic view of the semiotic current and addresses the behavior of the system itself, rather than the experience of the subjectivity engendered therein. The crisis of dissociation correlates to the epistemic crisis described above in that the systemic incompatibility that produces that crisis – i.e., the inability of the cognitive schemata to accommodate heterogeneous experience – is unavailable to cognitive analysis by the individual experiencing that crisis. Freud's theory of repression, on the other hand, addresses the *ethical* crisis of a "subject" that reflects on the terms and relations of Idiolect as a "reality" and hence as an orthodoxy. Repression is defined as the active exclusion of heterogeneous experience based on the perception or judgment that it is ethically abhorrent. Freud, in other words, describes the *epistemological* crisis of subjectivity in the Ethical domain. That crisis is engendered when the individual attempts to reflect upon and interpret that crisis in the symbolic terms of the domain that prohibits the impetus in question. Freud, in other words, addresses the outrage of heterogeneous experience from within the orthodoxy of symbolized meaning. Within the model being developed here, repression can be better correlated with the resistance of a domain to influx from the domain that precedes it, while *dissociation* can be better understood as the *diversion* of an impetus that is thus impeded, whether it is simply held in that previous domain, or dissipated via a competing channel.

The coexistence of both epistemic and epistemological awareness bifurcates the crisis experienced by subjectivity in the Ethical domain into an epistemic crisis and an ethical crisis. That epistemological crisis is *voiced* as a crisis of ethics rather than a crisis of epistemology, however, because it rests on the inside/outside division of Self and

Other, which is defined, as it were, from the arché of the Ethical domain. The basis for ethical judgment is, accordingly, off limits to cognitive reason. Understanding that "knowledge" or awareness in each of the various functional domains is organized across a differential that includes both epistemic awareness and epistemological awareness permits us to accommodate *both* an epistemic *and* an ethical view of traumatic crisis.

As we will see, that opposition circumscribes a division that is innate to human identity and subjectivity; namely the expansive nature of unmediated, individual *experience*, which is cumulative and held by a single subjectivity in epistemic awareness, and the reductive nature of shared signification and social interaction, which relies upon the epistemological awareness of its participants to mediate between their separate experiences and their apprehensions of symbolized meaning in order to construct a "reality" that is perceived to be shared. Only in balancing these expansive (individual) and reductive (collective) agendas can signification ensure a common basis for communication and social cohesion, while at the same time providing the means for individual expression in establishing what is shared. Thus among the various objectives that signification must fulfill across its various differentials, the division of epistemic and epistemological awareness, together with the necessary mediation between what is individual and what is shared, will emerge as presenting the greatest potential for traumatic crisis, but also the most critical impetus that drives signification and enables subjectivity to emerge and be developed.

The inertia or conservative quality of Idiolect with regard to modification is derived from the fact that it is a fully symbolized domain, the discretely posited and

noncontiguous elements of which acquire their symbolic meaning in relation to all other elements in that signified field. The interrelation of all parts *with* all parts applies to the various articulated instances in Idiolect's field of signification not only at any given moment, but in its entire temporal development.[22] A capacity for temporal ordering only emerges with the fragmentation of experience in the Idiolectic domain, given that temporality expresses a *logical* (serial) relationship between discretely posited events or instances of signification. Temporality plays a role in other logical relationships as well, including relationships of condition and causality. Whatever its manifestation, however, the arrangement of experience within temporality's linear and serial association depends upon the separation of experience into discrete instances, and the availability of the *either/or* dialectic that characterizes propositional logic used by Idiolect.

Organizational differences between the domains both establish the requisite differentials that drive the semiotic current, and create the preconditions for incommensurability that can lead to the obstruction of that current. Temporality, for instance, is not expressed in the Epistemic, nor is it expressed in the Ethical domain, since these domains are not organized using a (fully) predicate logic. Temporal ordering characterizes Idiolect, however, and since subjectivity in the Ethical domain reflects on Idiolect, the introduction of temporality in Idiolect's structuring of experience has the potential to create an epistemological crisis for that Subjectivity. Defined by the strict opposition (and interrelation) of its parts, previous instances of signification in Idiolect, both individually, and in the schemata in which they were logically ordered, are held in

[22] See also Laing 50-51.

successive temporal recession from the present manifestation of Idiolect.[23] This temporal recession contextualizes the ongoing modification of Idiolect's terms and relations within what appears to be an orderly and cohesive path of evolution (presumably towards a more accurate apprehension of objective reality). Such cohesion is necessary in order to conceal from reflective consciousness the arbitrary nature of signification which, if imposed upon awareness, could lead to a crisis of meaning.

Despite their role in providing this necessary temporal cohesion, prior articulations and structures of Idiolect also create an ongoing potential for conflict in the cognitive schemata. New experience, in entering Idiolect, may engender a paradoxical relationship that invalidates a previously existing structure, since the structure of a closed system based on resolvable truth-values is intolerant of ambiguity. As stated earlier, despite the fact that traumatic crisis creates the appearance of an alternating *sequence* of identity, with one identity succeeding the other, in fact, those identities are a *simultaneity* (van der Kolk, *Intrusive* 177). That simultaneity rests on the fact that, with the influx of heterogeneous experience, competing "identities" are projected into Idiolect where the terms of Idiolect cannot *simultaneously* express all experience (and therefore, identity). Those competing identities and apprehensions of meaning then pass from Idiolect into the domain of social interaction by the same subjectivity in the Ethical domain. Such competing articulations of symbolized identity originate with what is *inside* that subjectivity and defined as Self.

[23] See Roland Barthes's theory of the simulacrum. Roland Barthes, "The Structuralist Activity," *Critical Theory Since Plato*, ed. Hazard Adams (Fort Worth, TX: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich College Publishers, 1992) 1128-1130.

Sensory experience that is passed to the Ethical domain encounters difficulty when what has been defined as Self demands expression using terms in Idiolect that exclude one another. (The conflicted "baby-killer"/"war hero" dichotomy in the identity of the Vietnam veteran is a succinct example of such conflict.) The closed, interrelated terms of Idiolect precludes such ambiguity, however, since ambiguity in such a closed system of interrelated elements destroys the integrity of *all* of the system's elements, and hence, of all meaning and identity. Unable to accommodate what is expressed in its terms and relations as an ambiguity, Idiolect divides and isolates competing representations of subjectivity within itself by creating a parallel channel or Idiolectic expression in order to dissipate the overflow of impetus. I will return to this later in the chapter, when I discuss secondary and parallel discourse.

The Epistemic, Ethical, and Idiolect are not *shared* domains since they are not accessible to the *unmediated* experience of any other individual. The structure of each, in other words, is generated by a single agency – that of the individual herself. For each individual, symbolized meaning always remains an amalgam of individual experience and a cognitive approximation of what is *perceived* to be shared as an external, objective "reality." Idiolect is established as a symbolized representation of an individual's experience of the outside world that can neither be shared, nor escaped by the individual, despite the perception that meaning is shared by members of a discursive community. The isolation of individual cognition does not invalidate those individually held domains as capricious, however, since its unavailability to direct examination or challenge renders them to some degree resistant to modification. Additional stability is created by the fact

that the Epistemic domain cannot be reduced to anything beyond the senses themselves. The bipartite articulation and inside/outside governing relation of the Ethical domain acquire and maintain their validity by deiectically referencing their origins in the unmediated and unfragmented experience of the Epistemic domain, and subsequently lend that validity to the symbolic terms of the Idiolect they generate. This bond also serves to render the entire process of individual cognition stable with regards large-scale alteration in the face of social resistance. That deiectic connection is then carried forward to the domain of social interaction in which the individual represents herself. This shift from the self-containment of individual experience to the domains of shared communication, and the individual's capacity to actively restructure Idiolect using hypothesis, fantasy, dream, or other creative processes will be the final theoretical focus of this chapter.

Differential	Epistemic domain	Ethical domain	Idiolect
Logical Terms	Integrated, spatial logic (mapping)	Protean predicate logic: inside/outside	Fully predicate logic: either/or
Subjectivity	Subject-in-itself	Divided subjectivity – Self/Other	Objectified subjectivity: subject & its objects
Objectifications	None	Other as precursor to objectification	Fully formed objects held in relation to subject
Manner of "awareness"	Epistemic awareness	Epistemic awareness of own domain. Reflective, epistemological awareness of Idiolect	Epistemic awareness of own domain. Held in epistemological awareness in the Ethical domain
Agency	Single agency	Single agency	Single agency

Table 3: Characteristics of differentials manifested in Epistemic, Ethical, & Idiolect (partial list)

2.6 The Narrative and Communicative domains: Public Discourse

Two domains remain to be described here – the *Narrative domain*, and the *Communicative domain*.[24] Although the Narrative domain precedes the Communicative domain in the circuitous channel of semiotic activity, functioning in tandem with Idiolect to structure the individual apprehension of symbolized meaning and identity, it will actually be useful to begin here by laying out the characteristics of the Communicative domain. As I have indicated, the reanalysis of any given domain's structure in order to accommodate novel or heterogeneous experience is constrained by the tension maintained between that which is experienced by the individual directly, and that which is mutually comprehensible to others in social discourse (i.e., experience that is acknowledged to be *shared*). Being both an experiencing being *and* a social being, the individual is bound by two competing imperatives – an imperative to *expand* the categories, terms and relations of symbolized meaning in order to accommodate personal experience, and an imperative to uphold the limits placed on such expansion in the domain of social discourse (the Communicative domain).

As we will see, the Narrative domain will play a unique role in mediating these often conflicting objectives by creating an experimental space in which symbolized

[24] The term 'Narrative domain' refers to the function of this domain, in which symbolized terms can be temporarily manipulated without permanently altering the innate structure of Idiolect both during creative activities, and for the purposes of formulating interpersonal communication. Not necessarily a reflection of the individual's apprehension of reality (i.e., correlate with Idiolect), the Narrative domain allows for speech acts that are purposefully deceptive, etc. The Communicative domain circumscribes the space in which social interaction takes place as a space *between* individual cognitions, and therefore it is not held or apprehended by anyone. If one can say that meaning is *held* in the Communicative domain, then the form which meaning takes would be constantly in flux, and comprised of some theoretical balance point between different apprehensions meaning as held by each of the participants in discourse. In this sense, meaning in the Communicative domain is intangible, amorphous, and can only be understood to exist as an "entity" (i.e., a field of symbolized meaning) only in the most theoretical of terms.

meaning can be consciously manipulated. The Communicative domain, on the other hand, forms the bulwark of resistance against the modification of shared signified meaning (*shared signification*) by the individual without the consensus of at least some part of the *discursive community*.[25] The need to *perceive* meaning as having been derived from an externally determined and hence *shareable* "reality" leaves the individual vulnerable to the resistance of the Communicative domain to modification. As a result, the Communicative domain is, in some measure, able to constrain the articulation of experience in Idiolect – the individual's *apprehension* of shared (symbolized) meaning.

Shared signification takes place in the space between unmingled subjects, each with her own personal history of experience and apprehension of meaning expressed in Idiolect. The symbolized expression of experience reflected in the Communicative domain is constituted and amended where the disparate semiotic activities of many individuals intersect, each of whom is driven to modify shared signification in such a way that her experience, identity, and apprehension of meaning are socially acknowledged. Despite individual efforts, the Communicative domain is a *shared* domain, which means that it must somehow accommodate semiotic input from *all* participants in social discourse as efficaciously as possible. The Communicative domain can be seen as a domain of compromise in which the expression of symbolized meaning that is the *most*

[25] A discursive community is a community of individuals bound by a compact that meaning is shared among themselves. The community is defined and delimited, in other words, by what is perceived to be a field of shared, signified meaning, and by extension, by shared experience. It follows, then, that discord over the legitimacy of shared meaning (expressed as a heterogeneous contribution to that discourse) annuls the bond between the participants in that community. This, in turn, threatens to dissolve the discursive community's shared identity, and thus, its claim to legitimacy.

adequate for the *greatest number of individuals* comes to dominate.[26] The individual's linguistic bond to the Communicative domain and the imperative that language should be mutually comprehensible allows that domain to exert considerable influence over signification despite the fact that, unlike experience shaped in the Ethical or in Idiolect, it does not reference a single, irreducible somatosensory experience. Rather, it references a part of the somatosensory experience of each participant, but never any individual's experience in its entirety.[27] Symbolized meaning is not *held* in the Communicative domain. Rather, that domain is one in which individuals engage with one another in a discursive practice.

With the introduction of a domain that is shaped by the input of many individuals comes the need for a critical new differential – that of *agency.* Prior to this, the notion of agency did not play an essential role in describing potential disruption to the semiotic current. The sensory perception of a *single* individual must be accommodated by the Epistemic, Ethical, and Idiolectic domains of that same individual and therefore we can say that the *agency* of all three domains is a single, unified agency; i.e., these domains are created, held, and organized within the cognitive processes belonging to a single organism. The agency of the Communicative domain, by contrast, is a *collective agency* that originates with as many individuals as there are contributors to a particular discourse.

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[26] Competing versions of symbolized meaning can be supported concurrently within a larger social unit, since each social unit or *discursive community* is made up of smaller discursive communities. The entirety of the discursive community can be variously delimited, expanding to the dimensions of the global, or limiting itself to the discursive compact between just two individuals. So, for instance, a returning Vietnam veteran may likely have encountered the rejection of their experience in the broader national discourse of political disillusionment. Among other veterans, the individual's experience will have been received differently, as it may have been within the family unit.

[27] The need on the part of the individual to mediate between personal interest and social interest is described in Bataille's essay, "Residents of Hiroshima" (221-235).

That agency takes the form of a collective, social identity that is more or less shared by the members of a particular discursive community, and that is constructed and delimited within the field of signified meaning endorsed by that community. The individual must, in some measure, accommodate what is created in the Communicative domain – both in terms of shared, signified meaning and in terms of the collective social identity – if she is to continue to function as a *social being* within a discursive community.

An individual's identity arises both out of her own unique somatosensory experience, which gathers its authority from the fact that it is irreducible in human experience, and out of her need for social interaction, which demands that she subscribe in some part to a collective social identity invoked via the contribution of *many* experiencing individuals. Here, the foundation is laid for traumatic rupture and crisis, since on the one hand, individual identity is an *inclusive* identity driven to expand the limits of what can be signified by the constant influx of somatosensory experience. Collective, social identity, on the other hand, is a *reductive* identity that obtains its stability by excluding what is judged to be heterogeneous by the greater consensus of its participants. Collective social identity is thus driven to banish as Other whatever threatens its overall cohesion and in order to do so, it strives to *limit* the expression of experience that is not mutually shared. If the mediation between these competing imperatives fails, as it eventually must in a being that is both an autonomous individual *and* a social being, the conflict engendered by that failure emerges as cognitive dissonance or "disorder" – in other words, as traumatic crisis.

In understanding the Communicative domain and its unique structure, we can also begin to understand why organizational domains cannot simply be altered to better accommodate novel experience. A potential for conflict exists when experience is passed from *any* organizational domain to the next. Certain constraints on modification are endemic to the individual's own cognitive processes based simply upon the structural differences among the organizational domains. Nevertheless, since any individual's apprehension of meaning and identity is cognitively constructed, we would not expect *lasting* disruption to the semiotic current if all of the domains in which experience and subjectivity are structured were entirely *endemic* to the cognitive processes of that single individual. Experience structured and held in the Epistemic, Ethical and Idiolectic domains alone, for example, would not challenge the autonomy of the individual to modify the structure of those domains as needed. The Communicative domain, however, is a domain in which the individual does *not* possess the autonomy to modify its contents at will. Rather, that domain is evoked, as stated, by the collective interaction of members of the discursive community. This collective agency allows the domain to *refute* individual experience that does not meet the consensus of that community's members.

Aside from a collective agency, other unique characteristics lend the Communicative domain the resiliency needed both to refute the contributions of the single individual and to impose a social interpretation of her own experience upon her. Unlike the previous domains, the Communicative domain is held in neither an epistemological nor an epistemic awareness. The Communicative domain extends *beyond* the bounds of the individual's cognitive processes and just as the individual cannot

experience the Idiolect of another discursive participant, nor can she escape the confines of her own Idiolect in which her apprehension of shared meaning is held. The Communicative domain is a domain *beyond* cognitive apprehension, consisting of a pastiche of somatosensory cues and information – dispositions, rather than articulations, that must be *interpreted* by the individual in Idiolect before they acquire meaning. Interaction in the Communicative domain occurs via the body in some manner; i.e., the verbal utterances, gestures, expressions, etc., of its participants. Likewise, that interaction is *received* in that domain via the *senses*. We can say, in other words, that this interaction takes place *not* in the intrinsic cognitive processes of the individual, but rather, via the medium of psychomotor activities and sensory perception. What is received through the senses in this domain then enters the Epistemic domain as a renewed part of the individual's semiotic current.[28]

Each individual who participates in social interaction projects her own apprehension of "meaning" into the Communicative domain. Likewise, the contribution of other participants to shared signification is perceived by the individual in the form of somatosensory experience that can then be filtered through her cognitive structures (i.e., evaluated against what she herself has experienced, as well as against her own

[28] The case of language presented in the Communicative domain offers a unique understanding of the existence of multiple organizing domains. If a person were to attempt to speak Chinese to the average English speaker in the US, for instance, that experience would be received as auditory input in the Epistemic, separated from Self in the Ethical, and in most cases, be symbolized at the very least as "linguistic output by another individual" in Idiolect. Some listeners may have Idiolectic structure that allows them to interpret the speech as being in an Asian language, while others might identify the language as Chinese or even as a specific dialect such as Mandarin or Cantonese. Unless the individual spoke Chinese, however, and therefore had matched the phonetic sounds of the language with terms and relations in Idiolect, then the utterance would be rejected on the basis of its content. There would be, in other words, a mismatch between the terms of the speakers Idiolect (which includes the forms and structures of language), and the terms in the listener's Idiolect.

apprehension of symbolized meaning as it is articulated in Idiolect). Participants in the Communicative domain are cognitively isolated from one another with the result that "meaning" believed to be held or shared in the domain of our social interaction exists by compact alone; a compact by which the participants *agree* that such a shared symbolic order exists and is (more or less) mutually held. This compact is absolutely essential. The Communicative domain functions successfully only because there is a perception that meaning is shared.

Although meaning is not actually held in tandem with other members of any given discursive community, the need for a social consensus in the Communicative domain is still satisfied through the mechanism of *social mirroring*. The notion of mirroring was introduced with Lacan's theory of the *mirror stage*, during which the child first becomes aware of herself as a being separate from her environment and with a capacity – indeed, with a *need* – for symbolic expression (see 1.2.1). The mirror stage marks the child's induction (and interdiction) into the linguistic world of her progenitors. There, her need to express her own subjective experience is pitted against her need to cultivate a mastery of shared signification (i.e., language) while at the same time, the psychic unity with which she was born is sacrificed in the interest of acquiring the capacity to manipulate her social environment linguistically. The need to acquire language, itself a traumatic process, is not, however, a terminal phase in a child's development. Although Lacan's *mirror stage* provides us with an excellent explanation for the child's initial drive to acquire language, there is *no end* to our need to modify the

signified values in our apprehension of shared meaning (Idiolect) via the response of others in order to better function in the domain of social interaction.

The individual cannot formulate symbolized meaning in the absence of social interaction and social feedback. Since the cognitive structures or the experience of another individual are inaccessible, however, there must be some mechanism by which another person's apprehension of symbolized meaning can be evaluated in our own Idiolect – both in the form of their linguistic output, but also in the form of non-verbal responses, gestures or actions. Even more importantly, there must be a way in which we can evaluate the *adequacy* or *inadequacy* of our own apprehension of symbolized meaning within the context of the social domain. This adequacy or in adequacy of our own identity and apprehension of symbolized meaning is *mirrored* back to us in the actions, responses, and discourse of others. Social mirroring effectively closes the circuitous route circumscribed by the semiotic current by returning that current to what may be viewed as its nominal beginning – somatosensory experience. What we take in via our senses concerning our interactions with others is then either passed successfully through the organizational domains or rejected by these – that is, it is either recognized (*re-cognized*) or not recognized by that innate cognitive structure.

Without this capacity to *be mirrored by others* and to *mirror back to others* in the Communicative domain, the otherwise tenuously founded compact to behave as though symbolized meaning were shared – the fabric of social interdependence – could not be maintained. Just as essentially, without this mirroring function, we could not close the circuitous route as needed in order to maintain the constant dynamic flow of the semiotic

current.[29] We receive mirroring through sensory perception just as we do any other form of experiential input and therefore, mirroring returns the modified projections of our Idiolect to our senses and to the semiotic current that passes through our Epistemic, Ethical and Idiolectic domains. In this way, it can be reevaluated against the innate structure of those domains (our "cognitive schemata"), making the process of signification an ongoing one. Social mirroring closes the circuitous route of signification, thereby establishing an uninterrupted current of reanalysis and re-signification -- subjectivity.

There may be no perceptible conflict generated by what is socially mirrored back to the individual, and as a result, there may be no disruption to the semiotic current. This does not mean that the individual's apprehension of "meaning" is the same as that of other participants in the discursive community – indeed it *cannot* be precisely the same, since meaning is created by the relationship of an instance of signification in the entire field of meaning, i.e., within the context of the *entire Idiolect*. Given that every individual's experience is unique, the structure of her Idiolect is also thus – unique to only herself. From a pragmatic standpoint however, if the difference between individual apprehensions of symbolized meaning does not disrupt the *consensus* that meaning is shared, that consensus will continue to allow separate individuals to interact as though it were shared. Indeed, some variance is limitedly tolerated among the participants in a discursive community. An individual may accept what is mirrored back to her, or she may reject what is mirrored because it does not accord with her beliefs or identity as

[29] If we interrupt this circuit at any point results in the cessation of that current, and the breakdown of subjectivity, as is evidenced in the inevitable results of sensory deprivation, social isolation, etc.

based on her own Idiolect. In this way, the individual may, in return, mirror back acceptance or rejection to *others* in her discursive community. In either instance, however – either of acceptance or active rejection – there will have been sufficient accord between that individual's apprehension of symbolized meaning and what she has received via social mirroring to make an evaluation based on a truth-value possible. Active evaluation, in other words, is only possible when that which is being evaluated can be *accommodated* in Idioect.

This accord breaks down when the individual cannot parse through Idiolect what has been mirrored back in social discourse and interaction. If the mirrored response does not match the individual's expectation and cannot be accommodated in the innate structure of Idiolect (or the Ethical domain), then we can say that the individual's experience has not been adequately accommodated in the Communicative domain. (Conversely, it is equally true that the "contents" of the Communicative have not been adequately accommodated in the Epistemic, Ethical, and/or Idiolect of the individual). The individual will then be caught between the need to uphold shared signification and the collective social identity on the one hand (i.e., by bringing Idiolect into conformity with the Communicative), and the need to accommodate the semiotic current generated by her own somatosensory experiences on the other (i.e., by swaying the consensus in the Communicative to accommodate Idiolect). With this, I do not mean that a conflict will *necessarily* arise if the mirroring of another discursive participant does not match our individual's expectation, (although depending upon the importance *attached* to that other participant's censorship or approval, this may be the case). More often, it will be the

cumulative rejection of the individual's Idiolectic structure by multiple discursive participants and the resulting perception that the consensus supports a different articulation of symbolized meaning that will cause a disruption to the semiotic current.

If experience passed through successive organizational domains alters Idiolect *independently* of the social consensus, the result will be the dissolution of the linguistic bond between the individual and the discursive community.[30] At some point, the individual may be able to assert what is heterogeneous to the Communicative domain by swaying the consensus of its participants and bringing about a reanalysis of shared signification. (I will return to this later in the section). Until that time, however, Idiolect will be constrained by the Communicative domain and there will be an overflow of impetus in some number (or all) of the preceding domains. As I have suggested, such overflow is manifested as somatic symptoms when the overflow occurs in the Epistemic, and as instability in the dichotomy of Self/Other when the overflow takes place in the Ethical. In Idiolect, overflow of the semiotic current will result in the (unconsciouss) formation of an alternate symbolized order, which can be manifested as competing apprehension of "reality" and identity, as contradictory discourses concerning experience, or most dramatically, as the last of Herman's three dissociative disorders – Multiple Personality Disorder (an entirely re-symbolized "reality" and "identity").

Mediation between the extrinsically determined structure of the Communicative domain, and the intrinsically determined structure of the remaining domains is

[30] This dissolution of the linguistic bond with the discursive community need not automatically lead to crisis. In fact, in practices common in Buddhism, yoga, etc., the individual is able to *cultivate* a lasting awareness that "reality" and "meaning" are cognitively constructed, and yet, retain the ability to *function* within what is now recognized to be the illusion of shared meaning.

indispensable if such breakdown is to be circumvented. It is the last domain that I will define here – the Narrative domain – that enables this mediation between the Epistemic, Ethical, and Idiolectic domains on the one hand, and the Communicative domain on the other. The competing objectives of the experiencing individual and of the community – that is, between the experiencing individual and her *social self* – require a critical but delicate compromise in how meaning should be represented symbolically. In order to achieve this compromise, there must be a space in which the individual can *experiment* with potential signification or meaning, establishing a *temporary* symbolized (Idiolectic) domain. This experimental activity, which takes place in the Narrative domain, includes dream, fantasy, and other forms of creativity, as well as the consciously manipulated form and content of public discourse. It also includes speculative and theorizing activity – essentially any cognitive activity that involves the temporary (i.e., experimental) reconfiguration of identity and/or symbolized meaning. The Narrative domain is not comprised of a single, alternate field of signification, then, but rather contains any number of such domains.

The Narrative domain is unique in that here, we are dealing with a *dissociative* process that nonetheless may very well occur with conscious awareness. While Idiolect forms a cognitive apprehension of symbolized meaning, it also stands to reason that this apprehension would have no stability if Idiolect itself were the domain of experimental signification. Dreams, fantasies, and the creative activities of writing or playing a theatrical role do not automatically alter our perceptions of "reality" and when these activities are over, we are *returned* to a more stable apprehension of identity and

meaning. What these activities *are* able to do is create a temporary space in which theoretical signification can occur, borrowing on the terms and relations of Idiolect but reconfiguring them to a greater or lesser degree. This experimental activity enables the individual to find a more adequate compromise between unmediated experience (Epistemic/Ethical), and shared signification (Communicative) by establishing a structure that *better accommodates* the flow of semiotic current (as evidenced by the alleviation or conversely, the creation of blockages that obstruct that current).

The basic structure of the Narrative domain is *borrowed* from Idiolect, however, semiotic current is not passed from Idiolect into a Narrative domain. Rather, the Narrative is unique among the organizational domains in that it bypasses the primary semiotic channel. Semiotic current is temporarily passed from the Ethical domain directly into the Narrative domain, either concurrent to, or instead of that current being passed into Idiolect. Only a model thus conceived can account for *both* the emergence of unconscious (i.e., pre-signified) content in the experimental structures of the Narrative domain *and* the ability to examine and compare the contents of the Narrative and of Idiolect epistemologically (both the Narrative and Idiolect are held in epistemological awareness), as though they stood side by side. Were this not the case, the overall stability of the *subject* would be compromised. The existence of dreams, fantasy, the artistic process, cognitive creativity, as well as humor and language play attest to the existence of such a space in which the individual may cognitively experiment and construct new,

hypothetical meaning without denaturing or otherwise permanently altering the individual's apprehension of identity and meaning as it is perceived to be shared.[31]

The separation of Idiolect from the Narrative domains allow us to understand why cognition is capable of such innovation and creativity, and yet can simultaneously be unable to comprehend the structures that are closest to it. The capacity to actively utilize secondary domains to express Ethical organization is, as I will show, an crucial determining factor in the success (or lack thereof) of the individual when faced with traumatic circumstances, given that this capacity plays an essential, mediating role in negotiating new meaning, particularly where the structures of the Ethical and Communicative domains preclude or prohibit the articulation of experience. I will return to this mediating role later in this chapter. Here it will suffice to note that the Ethical domain exists as a dynamic domain *because* it possesses the ability to bring to life subordinate domains that may eventually divert the flow of signification through their structures and organization and insinuate themselves into the structures and organization of Idiolect.

The availability of the terms of Idiolect (or lack thereof) for comparison with the contents of the Narrative domain tells us whether current is being passed through both domains, or whether it is being passed though the Narrative domain alone. When dreaming, for instance, evaluation using a comparison with the terms of Idiolect (perceived "reality") is only possible in rare case of lucid dreaming. Ordinarily, however,

[31] What I distinguish here as Idiolect and the competing Narrative domains (of which there may be any of a number) are subsumed in Lacan's model under the single term, the Imaginary. It seems more useful here to distinguish between them, however, since Idiolect must retain a greater degree of stability and authority than the Narrative domains.

the semiotic current passes through a diverted channel not unlike the non-volitional overflow of Idiolect seen in traumatic rupture (see above), and that alternate, experimental symbolized order is *itself* perceived to represent "reality." The innate asymmetry of the system that privileges Idiolect over the Narrative is lost. It is only after a dream has been *recalled* – that is, *reconstituted* in the Narrative domain upon awakening – that the dream can be analyzed comparatively with the terms and relations of Idiolect. Other activities, such as theoretical speculation take place exclusively when such comparison is possible. Again, this act of comparison need not be interpreted as a psychologized process. Rather, when the semiotic current passes alternately through Idiolect and through the Narrative, the generation or alleviation of obstruction to the semiotic current may be generated or alleviated. The resulting increase or decrease in tension serves as "judgment" either of the inadequacy or adequacy of a representation in one domain or the other.

Based on the above described evaluation, subjectivity in the Ethical domain is able to modify Idiolect when it finds that the structures held in a Narrative domain represent a more satisfactory translation of experience, thereby reducing the tension produced across the various differentials. "Objects" can be placed in new relationship with one another or with the "subject," – a *metaphoric* transformation of meaning – or the boundaries of a term may be altered to include or exclude an aspect of signification – a *metonymic* transformation of meaning. These two linguistic operations – metaphor and metonymy – are the two operations recognized as transforming meaning within symbolized terms. There is, however, a third operation that I will discuss in much greater

detail throughout the remainder of this study, through which "meaning" is purposely made ambiguous. This notion of ambiguous signification – which I will call *covalent signification* – will prove to be indispensable to the resolution of trauma, as well as to the assertion of excluded experience in the domain of shared signification.

Differential	Epistemic domain	Ethical domain	Idiolectic domain	Narrative domain	Communicative domain
Logical Terms	Integrated, spatial logic (mapping)	Protean predicate logic: inside/outside	Fully predicate logic: either/or	Fully predicate logic: either/or	Presumed fully predicate logic: either/or
Subjectivity	Subject-in-itself	Divided subjectivity – Self/Other	Objectified subjectivity: subject & its objects	Objectified subjectivity: subject & its objects	Collective, social identity
Objectifications	None	Other as precursor to objectification	Fully formed objects held in relation to subject	Fully formed objects held in relation to subject	Presumed fully formed objects held in relation to subject
Manner of "awareness"	Epistemic awareness	Epistemic awareness of own domain. Reflective, epistemological awareness of Idiolect	Epistemic awareness of own domain. Held in epistemological awareness in the Ethical domain	Epistemic awareness of own domain. Held in epistemological awareness in the Ethical domain	Not held in any epistemic or epistemological awareness. Apprehended via sensory input
Agency	Single agency	Single agency	Single agency	Single agency	Collective agency - mirroring

Table 4: Characteristics of differentials, complete table

The various domains of organization described in this section, Epistemic, Ethical, Idiolectic, Narrative and Communicative, are domains of constant change and innovation that is prompted by their interaction with one another, their distinct structure, and the necessities of their varied agendas. Each individual constructs her own apprehension of "reality" out of the constant flow of semiotic current, and the ongoing reanalysis of the

organizational domains that shape (and are shaped by) that current. What is passed between individuals in the Communicative domain is not our individual experience, which is an experience of our own subjectivity. Rather, what we present in the Communicative domain is apprehended as somatosensory experience, and sets in motion that individual's experience of *her own* subjectivity. There are these multiple currents, each influencing but not merging into one another, and with each current brought into contact with the other in ever changing configuration there is a constant source of heterogeneous impulse that keeps those currents in motion. Thus, we must examine the specific differentials and the manner of each domain's organization as they *shape* the current of experience, accounting for the force and counterforce that initiates and inhibits its movement, as well as the innate properties of experience that shape its behavior when in motion. Only by exploring how these function in consort and indivisible from one another, can we begin to understand the progress of traumatic experience and its driving effect on signification and subjectivity.

2.7 Trauma as an Experience of the Sublime: The Semiotics of Silence

The symbolized and largely linguistic basis for our epistemological (e.g., rational) awareness, and the arbitrary nature of signification, leaves the thinking organism vulnerable to crisis simply on the basis of her own linguistic frailty. The individual relies upon the continuity and stability of symbolized meaning in order to maintain the perception that meaning is socially shared, and that it represents a stable, external reality. With the influx of heterogeneous experience, this continuity and stability may be lost if

reanalysis of that symbolized domain is delayed, resulting in a division of identity both in terms of the symbolized *subject*, and in terms of the boundaries of Self. Confronted with incompatible manifestations of subjectivity and with irreconcilable ambiguity in symbolized meaning, the individual is driven to seek a resolution for the resulting traumatic conflict. Regardless the resolution that is ultimately found, prior meaning and identity as these were apprehended by the individual will be annulled or *foreclosed* upon, leading to a temporal rupture or lacuna in the continuity of the subject's evolution. Naturally, whatever resolution is sought must satisfy both the individual's need to express her own experience, and the need to maintain mutual comprehensibility in the Communicative domain. Every individual is bound by these competing imperatives – that of an experiencing being, and that of a social being.

In the case of conflict that arises at the threshold of the Communicative domain, one might, in some measure, revive the now discredited DSM-III definition of trauma. Rather than describing trauma as something that is outside the range of *human* experience, however, we should say that trauma is outside the range of socially signifiable, and hence, mutually comprehensible experience. (Here, being "human" says more about our social identification with the discursive community than it does about the ontological category to which we belong.) Traumatic conflict does not originate with any intrinsic quality in the (traumatic) experience or event, but in limitations in available symbolized meaning, and in the irrefutability of somatosensory experience versus the inertia of shared signification. The need to compromise between signifying unmediated experience on the one hand, and maintaining the compact that meaning is shared on the

other, forces the individual to face the inadequacy of any symbolized field of meaning to express all meaning. With this, comes the traumatizing awareness that meaning, since based on compromise, is arbitrary. The individual does not suffer the *loss* of language as much as the complete *devaluation* of language, and the paradoxical need to express an experience that is characterized by the silence it has created. There are words, but the words are emptied of meaning.

It is in this experience – the devaluation of symbolized meaning, and with it, the devaluation of identity, and rational, epistemological thought – that the traumatized individual encounters *the sublime*. The term *sublime* has been used by philosophers and theorists in a variety of senses, but with each use drawing upon a common image of that which is too vast or powerful to be confronted or comprehended. Kant distinguished between two aspects of the sublime; the *mathematically sublime*, which describes something that inspires awe because it is so immeasurably vast, and the *dynamically sublime*, which describes something that inspires awe because it is unspeakably powerful (Kant, *Judgment* 94-97). Closer to the field of psychology and traditional trauma theory, Freud took up the notion of the sublime and its power with his concept of *sublimation*. Sublimation, in Freudian theory, is the transformation of dangerously powerful drives or impulses into productive channels – usually as dream or as creative processes. Freud, in other words, addresses the individual's efforts to come to terms with the sublime in a productive manner, thereby resolving the symptoms produced by unbridled drives. In more recent years, Lyotard extensively developed the notion of the sublime, using the term to describe meaning that exceeds "rational semiosis" and intention. The sublime, he

reasoned, expressed in terms of its intensity and in the "dissimilitude of signs and instances."[32]

Trauma is an experience of the *sublime* in all of these various senses. Traumatic experience is simply an experience that fails to find accommodation within the structure of the various organizational domains, including the symbolized terms and relations of Idiolect. In this sense, traumatic experience is immeasurably large, extending beyond the articulations and dispositions of meaning. It is immeasurably powerful as well, exerting pressure on the structure of the organizational domains in order to create the accommodation it needs, and destroying meaning and identity in its efforts to do so. Lyotard's theoretical stance goes farther towards a semiotic understanding of the cognitively sublime by directly addressing the inability of the semiotic system to deal with vastly heterogeneous experience, and how this leads to a breakdown of cognitive reason. Viewed in terms of semiosis, it is not simply negatively evaluated experience that is sublime, and hence, in a sense, traumatic. Positive encounters with the sublime, including certain forms of meditation and the *Unio Mystica* of religious experience also rupture the categories, terms and expressions of symbolized reason, and yet may be highly desired and sought after experiences. All experience of the sublime leaves the experiencer speechless, and with a diminished sense of subjective identity. What I would argue ultimately distinguishes such positive experiences of the sublime from "trauma" is not the quality of the experience, but rather, the evaluation of the experience as desired or undesired. In terms of the breakdown of language and subjective identity that is evoked

[32] Jean François Lyotard, *Libidinal Economy*, trans. Iain Hamilton Grant (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993) 60.

by an experience of the sublime, however, there no difference between mystic experience and trauma.

Freud's notion of sublimation, which was later take up by Lacan as a part of his semiotic reading of Freud's theories, specifically addresses the successful resolution of traumatic disorganization resulting from uncontrolled drives. In that initial, psychoanalytic sense, sublimation follows an encounter with the sublime, in which the raw forces that threaten to engulf and destroy the ego (subjective identity) are harnessed or channelled in a creative fashion. In semiotic terms, the creative realization of such drives ultimately serves to expand the possibilities of symbolized expression. Lacan elaborates on this notion, defining the encounter with the sublime as the return of alienated subjectivity (*jouissance*) in the form of the *object of desire*. This reunion with the object of desire (Self exiled as Other, and henceforth desired) annuls the presumed divisions created by the process of signification. The result, *jouissance*, leads to an expansion of subjective being. Kristeva further expanded the notion of re-merger with alienated subjectivity to include the return of Self that is misrecognized as still being Other, and that is therefore undesired. This darker side of the sublime, what Kristeva calls *the abject*, is nevertheless a counterpart to the *object of desire*. The quality of the encounter with the sublime, like the respective quality of the *unio mystica* or trauma, is determined by the terms available in the symbolized domains to evaluate that experience. Whether positive or negative, the dissolution of identity that follows an encounter with the sublime, and the force of unaccommodated and unshaped semiotic current, must

somehow find an articulation in newly formed meaning and identity. It must, in other words, be *sublimated*.

The joint notions of the sublime and of sublimation can be easily understood using the model of subjectivity and of traumatic crisis being developed here. The sublime, in a strict, theoretical sense, describes the qualities of traumatic experience, which is literally "too large" to be contained in the existent terms and relations of symbolized meaning. As a result, the semiotic current produced by such an experience may be accommodated by concurrent and competing semiotic channels. Competing signification finds itself in a state of continual flux (*oscillation*). In terms of the dynamic system, that state of fluctuation and its eventual resolution are best expressed using the concept of the *eigenstate*: the expression of a moment of stasis within a dynamic system when (hypothetically) measurable and observable qualities can be expressed using discrete and non-contiguous values. A commonplace example of the eigenstate is a faucet fed by both a hot and a cold tap, for which there will be an endless array of temperatures at which water may emerge. The temperature at which it emerges at any given moment represents the water's current eigenstate.

The eigenstate in signification is like a snapshot of meaning within the uninterrupted flow of signification, isolated within an infinitesimal cross section of time. Beyond the discrete expression of a momentary stasis however (i.e., a single signified value at the moment of utterance) the eigenstate is indissolubly associated with a specific dynamic of fluctuation (expressed in physics as its specific *wave function*, Ψ), which ensures that any expression of the eigenstate will be retained within the linear continuum

of successive eigenstates of that dynamic. The concept, then, allows us to conceive and express a current state in the flow of signification, both in terms of a single value in a symbolized field of meaning (synchronic), and in terms of an instance within the temporal progression of signification (diachronic).

Traumatic experience creates the need for competing symbolized expressions of meaning and identity, as observed in the phenomena of doublethink, and in the bifurcation of subjective identity. This kind of doubling – essentially the experience of competing eigenstates – is an expression of paradox that arises when symbolized meaning cannot express novel experience. The task of articulating traumatic experience is not one of simply telling a tragic story of unfortunate experience. Rather, the objective is to convey that experience using competing symbolized forms, identities and/or narratives such that each competing form is equally viable. Conflicted meaning as the indication of where signification fails is presented in such a way that competing expressions can neither be merged, nor separated. Multiple *eigenstates* are offered, redirecting the reader/viewer's awareness to the inadequacy of symbolized meaning, and the ongoing *dynamic* that underlies all meaning and identity.

A graphic illustration of fluctuation in symbolized meaning is offered by certain optical illusions (see fig. 1 below). In such illusions, the symbolized image being presented can resolve itself in one of several ways; in this example, either as a vase, or as two people facing one another. Each of these symbolized images contained within the "illusion" – the 'vase' or the 'faces' – comprises an eigenstate; that is, a momentary stasis in a system in flux. What is critical here is that we cannot say that the picture is of *either*

a vase *or* two faces. Rather, it is an image of neither and both, since both symbolized images exist in a reciprocal relationship with one another in such a way that they can neither be merged nor separated from one another. (We saw a similar reciprocal relationship in the worlds of lightness and of darkness in *The Others*, which I discussed at the beginning of this chapter.) In linguistic terms, this type of suspension between fluctuating eigenstates constitutes a *shifting metonymy*, meaning that the boundaries of the signifier shift to delineate different signifieds (vase or faces), relegating what remains to the background. This puts into linguistic terms what, up until now, I have described as "fluctuating" or "competing signification," and provides a way of speaking about a kind of signification that not only allows for ambiguity, it creates it.

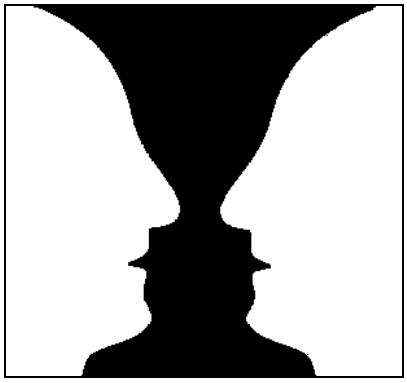

Figure 1: Optical illusion that demonstrates the eigenstates in a shifting metonymy.[33]

A shifting metonymy facilitates the creation of ambiguity in symbolized form that will prove to be of critical importance to the definition of trauma being proposed here. Ambiguity of the *signified* characterizes traumatic crisis, when that signified – an

[33] "Optical Illusions," *Science World British Columbia Exhibits*. 1996. Science World British Columbia, Vancouver. 29 March, 2005. < http://collection.nlc-bnc.ca/100/200/301/ic/can_digital_collections/ science_world/ english/exhibits/illusions/ >.

experience – cannot be expressed in existent symbolized terms. Until now, trauma research has tended to invalidate the symptomatic, behavioral, and cognitive fluctuations observed in trauma and to "pathologize" traumatized subjectivity. The oscillation of identity and signified meaning that comprises that "instability" is, however, a part of the natural functioning of the dynamic process that *creates* or *evokes* subjectivity and meaning. Where trauma differs from so-called "normal" functioning is in the length of time needed for the process of reanalysis, by which meaning is constituted and *re*-constituted to accommodate the semiotic current. That extended length of time, in turn, interjects an *unwanted* awareness that symbolized meaning does not represent an objective, external 'reality,' since experience is able to *exceed* the confines of what has been symbolized.

Competing symbolized expressions have to be evoked in order to express conflicted aspects of traumatic experience, since by its very nature traumatic experience *exceeds* the boundaries of what can be expressed using available terms (i.e., the sublime). The necessary appeal to conflicted symbolized expressions of experience and identity, often achieved through the overflow of the semiotic current into competing channels, likewise creates fluctuation in the distinction between what is Self, and what is Other. Ultimately, until symbolized meaning can be expanded or modified, traumatic experience will have to be expressed in *concurrently* held, *competing* domains (Idiolect and Narrative) and if the force that such experience generates in the semiotic current is great enough, the natural asymmetry that would ordinarily subordinate the Narrative to Idiolect may be lost.

No longer subordinated, that Narrative becomes a competing Idiolectic domain, giving rise to concurrent but competing subjective identity. The *subject* expressed by symbolized, subjective identity is indeed divided, being constituted in different fields of meaning but originating with the same somatosensory experience. At the same time, language as a shared expression of a single symbolized field of meaning truly is incapable of expressing meaning that arises in separate symbolic orders. The manifestation of subjective identity in one field or the other is, accordingly, an eigenstate of the entire current of subjectivity. Although all meaning and identity are essentially eigenstates in the semiotic current (both diachronically and synchronically), the parallel and conflicted manifestations of traumatic oscillation creates a conscious awareness that meaning represents an eigenstate rather than reflects "reality."

The traumatized individual moves, cognitively, between these two fields of meaning which, in their covalent, reciprocal relationship with one another, can neither be merged, nor separated. The way in which Self is expressed – in other words, the eigenstate of Self's expression – is determined by the movement between these fields, as well as by modifications to them as the Ethical domain is affected by the alternation between competing channels. The purpose of the trauma narrative is to represent this fragmentation of experience, meaning and identity into competing eigenstates and the expression of the way in which meaning is devalued by such oscillation. The successful trauma narrative manifests this oscillation by finding a way to express competing "realities" or competing fields of symbolized meaning and identity in such a way that

those "realities" can neither be merged nor separated within the narrative.[34] The task becomes one of creating an instance or instances of *covalent signification*, in other words, that will allow the reader to move between "realities" as though moving in a topography of discretely defined regions. At the same time, covalent signification advances competing symbolized "realities" in such a way that each is perceived as valid. We saw a basic example of this mechanism in *The Others,* both in the competing interpretations of narrative reality presented by Ann and by Grace, and at a more subtle level, in the separation of light from darkness. In *Traumnovelle* and in other works I examine here, we will see a number of different kinds of covalent signification, all of which serve this same purpose.

The objective of covalent signification is not merely to allow the individual to express competing symbolized forms in order to *create* accommodation for heterogeneous experience. In a trauma narrative, what is essential is the reader or viewer's ability to experience two (or more) realities as valid such that they can neither be merged nor separated within the narrative. The coexistence of competing narratives simultaneously recreates the devaluation of symbolized meaning and with it, the *silence* of traumatic experience. The reader or viewer's own apprehension of reality is brought, to some degree, into *traumatic oscillation*, thereby forcing her to share some measure of the traumatic experience itself. Optimally, the trauma narrative opens up the possibility that the individual's heterogeneous experience will come to be accepted in the

[34] Covalent signification and the viral project of trauma allow us to define the trauma narrative from within the structure of the narrative itself, without forcing us to take recourse in the event that the narrative depicts. Indeed, a narrative that depicts a so-called "traumatic event," but that does not express the splitting of identity, and the loss or fragmentation of meaning is not a trauma narrative according to the definition of trauma and trauma narrative being presented here.

Communicative domain by creating a shared consensus as to its validity. The trauma narrative is, in this sense, a *viral narrative* that aims to convey through *empathic experience* the breakdown of meaning by interjecting the awareness that meaning is a cognitive and social construct *incapable* of expressing all experience. If it is successful, the trauma narrative will rupture the viewer or reader's apprehension of meaning in a subtle way, and in so doing, will prompt the restructuring of her organizational domains while *recreating* in her what cannot be expressed – silence. The silence of trauma is the silence of symbolized meaning that can only be expressed in a covalent oscillation such that one valence invokes the absence of the other(s). Just as importantly, that silence represents the absence of the symbolized term that could unify the two.

In the remaining three chapters of this study, I will turn to a more in-depth analysis of two narratives: Arthur Schnitzler's *Traumnovelle,* and Russell Banks's *The Sweet Hereafter.* In those analyses, I will return to the theoretical points outlined in this chapter in order to demonstrate precisely how they function in a trauma narrative. What is of primary interest in these analyses is the breakdown of meaning through the introduction of oscillating eigenstates characteristic of traumatic crisis, and the recreation of that oscillation in the trauma narrative through the use of covalent signification. (Although there are many more ways to create covalent signification than those illustrated in these two narratives, space will not permit me to present a more detailed analysis of those methods. A more in-depth examination of covalent signification will have to remain for a later study.) Through these narrative analyses, the functioning of this dynamic and semiotic model of subjectivity will become clearer, as will the precise

characteristics inherent in the disruption of that dynamic – characteristics that are commonly regarded as the hallmarks of traumatic crisis.

Chapter 3: Arthur Schnitzler's *Traumnovelle*: Traumatic Crisis as an Internal Experience

> Consider an actor. He sees himself as an actor, an actor with a fine physique, a handsome face and manly voice. He takes great care to keep himself in good physical shape. Yet as the years pass he will progressively and very critically note that he is becoming older. His handsome features start to fade, his body loses its strength and his voice loses its depth. […] He becomes depressed and unhappy because his conception of himself is disappearing. His self-identification with a transitory phenomenon is taking its toll. (Swami Satyananda Saraswati)[1]

3.1 The Foreclosure of Identity: Displaced Subjectivity and Displaced Conflict

The narrative that I have selected to examine in this chapter, Arthur Schnitzler's *Traumnovelle,* does not depict a reaction to an event broadly regarded as traumatic and therefore, the novella that has not traditionally been viewed as a trauma narrative. In fact, one may argue of the novella that it does not depict a significant event of any kind. Nevertheless, the text provides an exceptionally clear example of traumatic crisis as it is described in the theoretical model presented here. Schnitzler, a physician, in fin-de-siecle Vienna, wrote *Traumnovelle* in 1926. The novella is still widely familiar to people in the field of *Germanistik*, and to a much lesser degree, to the English speaking readership at large under the title, *Dream Story*, since its translation in 1955.[2] In recent years, the narrative has been introduced to a much wider audience through Stanley Kubrik's

[1] Swami Satyananda Saraswati, *Meditations from the Tantras*, ed. Swami Nishchalananda Saraswati (Monghyr, Bihar: Bihar School of Yoga, 1974) 56.
[2] Except where noted, all English translations of *Traumnovelle* are from the following edition: Arthur Schnitzler, *Dream Story*, trans. Otto P. Schinnerer (Los Angeles: Green Integer, 1955).

adaptation of the text in the film *Eyes Wide Shut* (1999).[3] My focus in this chapter will be on the original text, *Traumnovelle* although I will also draw on the film adaptation when it elucidates the narrative in a particularly concise manner.

There is a rich body of secondary literature on Schnitzler's work that spans many decades, any within that literature, there are certain interpretive trends. (That scholarship often overlaps with research on Kubrick's adaptation of the novella, although the body of secondary literature that pertains to the film is significantly more limited.) One of the most productive areas of inquiry has come from the disciplines of feminist theory and gender studies. Scholars in those disciplines have looked closely at the way in which Schnitzler constructs his male and female figures, and accordingly, what these constructions tell us about Viennese culture at the turn of the century. In her article, "The Power of the Gaze," Susan Anderson gives a modernist reading *Traumnovelle* that focuses the feminist gaze: a visual metaphor that she uses "to question *fin-de-siècle* gender norms and to offer a more differentiated idea of shifting gender norms."[4] A similar approach is taken by Andreas Huyssen in his article, "The Disturbance of Vision in Vienna Modernism."[5] In another recent study, Katherine Arens has looked at the construction of gender roles in Vienna's "gendered and class-based economic and social

[3] *Eyes Wide Shut*, dir. Stanley Kubrick. Perf. Nichole Kidman, Tom Cruise, Madison Eginton, and Sidney Pollack, 1999, DVD, Warner Home Video, 2001.
[4] Susan C. Anderson, "The Power of the Gaze: Visual Metaphors in Schnitzler's Prose Works and Dramas," *A Companion to the Works of Arthur Schnitzler,* ed. Dagmar C. G. Lorenz (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2003) 303.
[5] Andreas Huyssen, "The Disturbance of Vision in Vienna Modernism," *Modernism/Modernity* 5.3 (1998): 33-47.

expectation" (Ahrens 244).[6] Imke Meyer, by contrast, specifically examines the relationship between gender and class and in particular, how that relationship affects the male figures in Schnitzler's works.[7]

Many scholars have taken a psychological approach to Schnitzler's work, and specifically, to *Traumnovelle* and Kubrick's adaptation in *Eyes Wide Shut*.[8] These studies tend to offer a Freudian reading of Schnitzler, and indeed, the two men have been linked by scholars such as Wolfgang Nehring and Peter Loewenberg.[9] Others focus specifically on the interrelationship of *Eros* and *Thanatos*,[10] or on notions of decadence and perversity[11] – a focus that is not surprising given the degree of moral outrage that many of Schnitzler's works engendered when they were first released, and for some years afterwards (Lorenz, *Introduction* 7). More relevant to what I do here is an essay by Waltraud Wende entitled, "Love is More than Just a Game for Two." In that article, Wende looks specifically at the construction of ambiguity in Kubrick's *Eyes Wide Shut* (as well as in Colombani's *A la Folie Pas du Tout*), and at the way in which these films show us how desire blurs the lines between reality and psychological vision.[12] Such

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[6] Katherine Arens, "Schnitzler and the Discourse of Gender in *Fin-de-siècle* Vienna," *A Companion to the Works of Arthur Schnitzler*, ed. Dagmar C. G. Lorenz (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2003) 243-264.
[7] Imke Meyer, "'Thou Shalt Not Make Unto Thee Any Graven Image': Crises of Masculinity in Schnitzler's *Die Fremde*," *A Companion to the Works of Arthur Schnitzler*, ed. Dagmar C. G. Lorenz (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2003) 277-300.
[8] See Friedrich Hacker, "Im falschen Leben gibt es kein Richtiges," *Literatur und Kritik* 163/164 (1982): 36-44. Eve Leeman, "Dreamstory: a Sexual and Psychological Journey," *Lancet* 354.9189 (1999): 1566-67.
[9] Wolfgang Nehring, "Schnitzler, Freud's Alter Ego?" *Modern Austrian Literature* 10.3-4 (1977): 179-94. Peter Loewenberg, "Freud, Schnitzler, and *Eyes Wide Shut*," *Psyche – Zeitschrift für Psychoanalyse und ihre Anwendungen* 58.12 (2004): 1156-1181.
[10] See Charles H. Helmetag, "Dream Odysseys: Schnitzler's *Traumnovelle* and Kubrick's *Eyes Wide Shut*," *Literature Film Quarterly* 31.4 (2003): 276-286.
[11] See Bram Dijkstra, *Idols of Perversity: Fantasies of Feminine Evil in Fin-de-siècle Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986).
[12] Waltraud Wende, "Love is More than Just a Game for Two: The Experience of Limits in Stanley Kubrick's *Eyes Wide Shut* (England 1999) and Laetitia Colombani's *À la Folie Pas du Tout* (France, 2002,

essentially psychological approaches have dominated the secondary literature on Schnitzler, although more recently some scholars have argued that Schnitzler's writing is perhaps less psychologically oriented and symbolic, but instead, more focused on realism (Ahrens 260).[13]

A significant body of secondary literature exists that looks specifically at Schnitzler's work as it reflects social trends in the Austro-Hungarian empire, and more specifically, in *fin-de siècle* Vienna. In a recent cultural-historical study, Peter Gay examines how middle class culture emerged and evolved within this cultural context. As Dagmar Lorenz notes, the title that Gay chose for that study, *Schnitzler's Century: The Making of Middle-Class Culture*, itself suggests that Schnitzler "is representative, even a paradigm of the modern bourgeois culture […]" (*Intro* 10).[14] Lorenz goes on to note however, that this decision to use Schnitzler as such a representation is problematic, "given his status as a Jew in the Austro-Hungarian empire" (*Intro* 8). Egon Schwarz, by contrast, has examined Schnitzler in terms of his cultural-historical relationship to *fin-de-siècle* Vienna, and in particular, his identity as a Jew in that culture. Schwarz concluded

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German Version, *Wahnsinnig Verliebt*)," *Lili Zeitschrift für Literaturwissenschaft und Linguistik* 34.135 (2004): 137-156. See also: Ernesto R. Acevedo-Munoz, "Don't Look Now: Kubrick, Schnitzler, and 'the Unbearable Agony of Desire,'" *Literature Interpretation Theory* 13.2 (2002): 117-137.

[13] See Felix W. Tweraser, *Political Dimensions of Arthur Schnitzler's Late Fiction* (Columbia, SC: Camden House, 1998). Anton Pelinka, "Die Struktur und die Probleme der Gesellschaft zur Zeit Arthur Schnitzlers," *Literatur und Kritik* 163/164 (1982): 59-66. Elizabeth G. Ametsbichler, "Der Reiz des Reigens': *Reigen* Works by Arthur Schnitzler and Werner Schwab," *Modern Austrian Literature* 31.3-4 (1998): 288-300.

[14] Peter Gay, *Schnitzler's Century: The Making of Middle-Class Culture, 1815-1914* (New York: Norton, 2001).

that "[Jews] had an urban middle-class status imposed upon them" (Schwarz, *Insiders* 58).[15]

The interrelation of psychological processes and social interaction has also been the subject of study, and it is this line of inquiry that perhaps comes the closest to the project that I undertake here. In an article entitled "The Self as Process in an Era of Transition: Competing Paradigms of Personality and Character in Schnitzler's Works," Dagmar Lorenz looks at Schnitzler's portrayal of social roles and cultural paradigms, which she characterizes as conflicted, shifting, and fluid (134).[16] She observes that "a person's role and function and his or her existential isolation present an unresolvable, even tragic dilemma" (*Self* 134). Here, Lorenz examines the restrictive nature of social roles and what she terms the "multilayered identity construction in Schnitzler" (134). As she notes of Schnitzler's protagonists:

> […] the struggle of Schnitzler's protagonists with new modalities and levels of consciousness takes place in isolation from the world of work and careers, as if in defiance of the bourgeois work ethic. Unable and unwilling to assume the roles their respective societies have in store for them, and for the most part mildly bored, Schnitzler's young men […] seek authentic experiences through their emotions and senses. (*Self* 134-35)

[15] Egon Schwarz, "Jews and Anti-Semetism in Fin-de-Siècle Vienna," *Insiders and Outsiders: Jewish and Gentile Culture in Germany and Austria*, ed. Dagmar C. G. Lorenz and Gabriele Weinberg (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1994) 47-65.
[16] Dagmar C. G. Lorenz, "The Self as Process in an Era of Transition: Competing Paradigms of Personality and Character in Schnitzler's Works," *A Companion to the Works of Arthur Schnitzler*, ed. Dagmar C. G. Lorenz (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2003) 129-147.

In this way, Lorenz sheds light on the interaction of the social with the personal and psychological, and in particular, on the restrictive nature of social status that, although created by social convention, nevertheless limits the public expression of identity: "*Reigen* and *Traumnovelle* are among the works that expose the relativity of social norms without loosing sight of the fact that they determine an individual's status and social range" (*Self* 135).

Unlike narratives that deal with so-called "catastrophic events" such as war, genocide, or natural disaster, *Traumnovelle* depicts an experience that is deceptively prosaic. The novella deals with what in simplest terms, is referred to as "mid-life crisis," an experience that is not commonly considered to be authentically traumatizing and that is even made the subject of humor. Certainly aging is not a discrete "event," nor is it an experience that is outside the range of usual human experience, and yet the term 'crisis' itself indicates that mid-life crisis indeed represents an experience or phenomenon that disrupts the individual's functioning and identity. If we look at mid-life crisis from within the model of subjectivity and the redefinition of trauma being developed here, it becomes more comprehensible how something as ubiquitous as aging can trigger traumatic crisis – a crisis of identity brought on by a disruption to the semiotic current that drives signification and evokes subjectivity.

Mid-life crisis is precipitated by an abrupt shift in one's perception of personal identity, characterized by the realization that one's lifespan is limited (death as Other encroaching upon Self), and that one's options as to how one lives one's life are limited by available time, health, commitments, social standing, and so forth. The foundation for

this disruption is laid well in advance of the actual crisis it engenders when specific life choices articulate some aspect of subjectivity, while concurrently silencing or excluding other aspects. This exclusion occurs either because specific articulations of identity preclude others, or simply because certain life choices have prevented the active pursuit of that excluded identity. In simpler terms, when an individual chooses a partner, she forfeits all other potential partners, and when an individual chooses a career, she forfeits other career paths through that choice – at least for a time, if not forever. The same holds true for many of life's choices. Far from being an unusual circumstance, the tendency for life choices to articulate some aspects of subjectivity while silencing others is virtually unavoidable. Inevitably, everyone suffers some loss of subjectivity when she becomes a *subject* in the social domain. Identity is formed and emerges in its *opposition* to other instances of identity – the primary characteristic of the field of signified meaning.

Subjectivity that does not find *immediate* expression in Idiolect and the Communicative domain is not necessarily irrevocably lost. While it is not possible to return to childhood and recover subjective identity that was articulated as oneself as a child, other aspects of subjective identity (the subject articulated in Idiolect) is more elective in nature. Someone who decides to pursue an education and a career in academia as an expression of identity, for example, may still change courses and pursue a career as a professional athlete, musician, or park ranger, for instance. We can say that such identity is *temporarily deferred* but still available. This is particularly true if the decision to forego an expression of identity is relatively recent. With time, however, the hold that one has upon deferred identity often becomes increasingly tenuous. The individual

frequently becomes more rooted in habit, career, family obligations, etc., and the likelihood that she will radically alter her life's path decreases in proportion to the degree of inertia generated both by the difficulties that oppose such change, and the burdens of current responsibilities and commitments. At some point in many people's lives there comes a time when they acknowledge that a drastic change in career or lifestyle is unlikely, that their health or stamina will no longer permit them to pursue certain activities, that they are past the age when they can bear children, or that they are no longer willing to accept a reduced standard of living in order to forge a new career path, etc. These kinds of realizations concerning the finitude of the human lifespan and the impossibility of living out all possible manifestations of one's identity figure largely in mid-life crisis. At the moment when the realization is reached that one either *cannot* or *will not* pursue deferred aspects of identity, we can say that *deferred identity* has become *foreclosed identity.*

When subjective identity is foreclosed upon, conflict may arise anywhere in the current of signification. It may arise in the Ethical domain when the boundaries of Self have to be shifted to exclude that which is no longer recognized as belonging to one's *current* or *primary* subjective identity (Self), for example. Likewise, identity (the 'subject') formed in Idiolect may include potential subjective identity as a part of the subject, and the foreclosure of potential subjectivity may demand the revision of the boundaries of the subject. (A doctoral student who abandons her efforts to complete her degree would be forced to exclude symbolized identity as a future Ph.D., for instance.) Likewise, Idiolect binds identity not only within the contemporaneous articulations of the

field of signification, but also within the *temporal sequence* of prior articulations, and as a result, conflict may arise when the foreclose of identity creates *abrupt* changes in that temporal sequence. Such abrupt changes – changes in which an articulation of identity does not *gradually* succeed a prior articulation – interject the perception that there is a discontinuity in subjective identity. This perception of discontinuity disrupts the expectation that identity is stable and that the 'subject' constructed in Idiolect comprises an accurate representation of a real-world entity rather than a cognitive construct.

The conflict of mid-life crisis may be initiated in the Communicative Domain if the individual's apprehension of their own subjective identity is increasingly *rejected* by others in the discursive community. The social rejection of *deferred* identity, for instance, may force upon the individual an awareness that that identity is, in some measure, no longer valid and therefore threatened with immanent foreclosure. Returned (via social mirroring) to the Epistemic domain as somatosensory experience, that rejection can disrupt the semiotic current across any number of differentials among the organizational domains as the individual struggles to mediate between the *experience of Self* as identity, and identity as it is accepted and acknowledged in the domain of social interaction. Regardless where it arises, foreclosed identity has the potential to create conflict that interrupts the flow of signification, foundationally disrupting subjectivity.

It is just such a rejection of asserted identity in the Communicative domain that precipitates the traumatic crisis around which *Traumnovelle* is centered. The event at which this social rejection occurs is a masked ball (*Redout*) that the couple, Fridolin and Albertine had just attended. There the couple, who belong to the working middle class,

pretend to belong to a higher social standing than they can legitimately claim. (This assertion of a higher social standing is, in fact, an expression of deferred identity since, as I will show later in this section, each at least *perceives* that they have foregone the chance to advance their own social status by choosing to marry one another.) Their attendance at this ball is unusual, given their middle-class status, and indeed, this ball at the end of the Carnival period is the only such event that is open to the couple.

Kubrick's film makes the point somewhat clearer to the modern audience. In *Eyes Wide Shut,* the couple (Alice and Bill), attend a Christmas party given by one of Bill's wealthy employers. Their attendance there is equally unique, with a Christmas party being the one obvious social event at which individuals belonging to a wealthy class might 'appropriately' mix with their subordinates. While initial outward appearances give the impression that Alice and Bill are an upper-class couple among other high class couples, the two are not there as *social equals.* The inequality of their social standing with the other party-goers is betrayed when Bill is called away from the party to attend to a woman who has overdosed in an upstairs room. That woman is, herself, revealed to be one of the top-end prostitutes commissioned to "entertain" the wealthy guests, and like Bill, is attending the party in the capacity of a subordinate who can be called away with the snap of someone's fingers.

In the novella, as in the film adaptation, Fridolin and Albertine's attempt to 'blend in' at the masked ball and to pass themselves off as belonging to the appropriate social standing constitutes a private strategy for managing deferred identity. They are engaging in and acting out a fantasy of what it would be like to belong to that social milieu. In

terms of the semiotic current, deferred identity – identity that would have been expressed had the couple achieved a higher social status – is articulated in a Narrative domain, which has been constructed as a means of holding subjectivity that is otherwise precluded in Idiolect. Their attempt to pass themselves off as upper-class at the ball is by no means successful. The couple's responses to others in that environment demonstrate that they themselves are naïve about social cues and gestures that would be familiar to anyone legitimately belonging to that milieu. As a result, those with a legitimate claim to move in that environment are able to recognize very quickly that Fridolin and Albertine do not actually belong there. Fridolin, for instance, is approached almost immediately by two women, who behave as though they know him:

> Was Fridolin betraf, so war er gleich beim Eintritt in den Saal wie ein mit Ungeduld erwarteter Freund von Zwei roten Dominos begrüßt worden, über deren Person er sich nicht klar zu werden vermochte, obzwar sie über allerlei Geschichten aus seiner Studenten- und Spitalzeit auffallend genauen Bescheid wußten. (11-12)[17]

The eagerness of these two women to greet him has nothing to do with recognition, but simply reflects their eagerness to find a paying client. Even the fact that they appear to know all sorts of stories about his days as a student and intern is unremarkable, since the women have been with any number of gentlemen of Fridolin's

[17] "No sooner had Fridolin entered the ball-room than he was greeted, like a long lost friend, by two women dressed in red dominoes. He has no idea who they were, although they were unusually well-informed about many affairs of his student days and internship" (6).

profession. These stories that they claim to recall are simply a means to becoming familiar with their potential mark, and their ruse is nothing more than a stylized manner of interaction characteristic of the women's role at the ball. Fridolin's naïveté with regard to these women, the earnestness with which he receives their flattering advances, and his sincere efforts to place where he might have met them before ultimately betray him to the women as an outsider and they abandon him as a potential customer with false promises of a speedy return. Fridolin is unable to recognize that he has been summarily dismissed, and his fruitless attempt to find these women merely underscores his status as a kind of "infiltrator:"

> Aus der Loge, in die sie ihn mit verheißungsvoller Freundlichkeit geladen, hatten sie sich mit dem Versprechen entfernt sehr bald, und zwar unmaskiert, zurückzukommen, waren aber so lange fortgeblieben, daß er, ungeduldig geworden, verzog, sich ins Parterre zu begeben, wo er den beiden fragwürdigen Erscheinungen wieder zu begegnen hoffte. (12)[18]

Albertine fares no better than her husband in her interactions with the other party-goers. She is approached by a minor Polish aristocrat, whom she at first finds charming, but who subsequently shocks her with his abrupt sexual advances:

> [Albertine hatte] sich eben jäh einem Unbekannten entzogen, dessen melankolisch-blasiertes Wesen und fremdländerischer,

[18] "They had invited him into a box with great friendliness, but had left again with the promise that they would soon return without masks. When they did not appear, he became impatient and went down to the ballroom hoping to meet them there again, but eagerly as he scanned the room, he could not see them anywhere" (6).

> anscheinend polnischer Akzent sie anfangs bestrickt, der sie aber plötzlich durch ein unerwartet hingeworfenes, häßliches Wort verletzt, ja erschreckt hatte. (12)[19]

Like Fridolin, Albertine has been recognized as possessing a lower social standing than the other guests, however unlike Fridolin, whose recognized lower status marks him as a kind of infiltrator, Albertine has been mistaken for one of the prostitutes commissioned to attend the party. Like Fridolin as well, she was too unfamiliar with the finer elements of social interaction in this milieu to recognize the cause of the Polish aristocrat's familiarity. Indeed, the Polish aristocrat demonstrates the kind of behavior that the two women in red dominoes had expected from Fridolin – that is, he was expected to make a pretense of polite civility and then proceed straight to the business of negotiating a discrete sexual encounter.

Their affectation having been recognized and rejected within the social domain of the ball, Albertine and Fridolin withdraw to one another's company in order to regroup and to recover from the narcissistic injuries they have sustained. In so doing, they reestablish within the privacy of their own relationship the fantasy of social equality that had been so brusquely rejected only moments earlier:

> Und so saßen Mann und Frau, im Grunde froh, einem entäuschend banalen Maskenspiel entronnen zu sein, bald wie zwei Liebende, unter anderen verliebten Paaren im Büfettraum bei Austern und

[19] "[Albertine] had just freed herself from the company of a stranger whose blasé manner and apparently Polish accent had at first charmed her. Suddenly he had offended her – frightened her by a rather common and impertinent remark" (6-7).

> Champagner, plauderten sich vergnügt, als hätten sie eben erst Bekanntschaft miteinander geschlossen, in einer Komödie der Galantrie, des Widerstandes, der Verführung und des Gewährens hinein. (12)[20]

Under the spell of this compact between only themselves, the couple return home in an amorous mood, feeling closer to one another than they had in a very long time. The underlying impact of the social rejection at the masked ball does not emerge until the "grey dawning of everyday life, when the grey shadows of figures from the ball return" (7). The return of those figures to their mind marks the emergence of the conflict that had prompted the compensatory behavior to begin with (that is, passing themselves off as belonging to a higher social milieu), and that will form the basis of the traumatic crisis to come – the foreclosure of deferred identity in the form of an elevated social standing.

> [nun] stiegen die Schattengestalten von der Redout, der melancholisch Unbekannte und die roten Dominos, wieder zur Wirklichkeit empor; und jene unbeträchtlichen Erlebnisse waren mit einmal vom trügerischen Scheine versäumter Möglichkeiten zauberhaft und schmerzlich umflossen. Harmlose und doch lauernde Fragen, verschmitzte, doppeldeutige Antworten wechselten hin und her, keinem vom beiden entging, daß der andere es an der letzten Aufrichtigkeit fehlen ließ, und so fühlten

[20] "Fridolin and Albertina were glad to have escaped from a disappointingly commonplace masquerade prank, and soon sat like two lovers, among other couples, in the buffet, eating oysters and drinking champagne. They chatted gaily, as though they had just made each other's acquaintance, acting a comedy of courting, bashful resistance, seduction and surrender" (7).

> sich beide zu gelinder Rache aufgelegt. Sie übertrieben das Maß der Anziehung, das von ihren unbekannten Redoutenpartnern auf sie ausgestralt hätte, spotteten der eifersüchtigen Regungen, die der andere merken ließ, und leugneten ihre eigenen weg. (13)[21]

Fridolin and Albertine are confronting the foreclosure of identity precipitated by the social rejection of deferred identity, and the result of that rejection is the disruption of essential compensatory mechanisms that enable each to retain subjectivity that otherwise would be lost. In revisiting the rejection of the night before, Fridolin and Albertine *reassert the fantasy* that had precipitated that rejection, each portraying their disappointing encounter as though it had been a moment of potential infidelity, and seeking from one another the recognition that they failed to receive in the social environment of the masked ball. The couple's jealous reaction to one another expresses, in part, a fear that the other will leave – a fear that, as I will discuss below, is itself tied to deferred identity and a sense of immanent loss. In a more positive sense, however, that jealous reaction also serves a very positive function in *supporting* deferred subjectivity, and in reducing the loss felt by having deferred other expressions of identity.

By reacting with jealousy at their partner's presumed inappropriate flirtation and by exaggerating the significance of their own failed encounter, the couple *bypasses* the rejection of their claims to a higher social standing and in essence, tacitly validate one

[21] But now […], the shadowy forms of the masquerade, the melancholy stranger and the red dominoes, rose again into reality. And all at once those insignificant events were imbued, magically and painfully, with the deceptive glow of neglected opportunities. Harmless but probing questions, and sly, ambiguous answers were exchanged. Neither failed to notice that the other was not absolutely honest, and so they became slightly vindictive. They exaggerated the degree of attraction that their unknown partners at the ball had exerted upon them while each made fun of the other's tendencies to jealousy and denied his own" (7-8).

another in those claims. While their claims to a higher status are rejected by the discursive community of the masked ball (e.g., by those who possess that higher status), as a couple, Fridolin and Albertine *themselves* comprise a discursive community with the capacity to sanction or reject one another's apprehensions of reality and identity. Within that private compact, their jealous reactions validate the partner's *potential* to achieve a higher status (i.e., through a well placed match) thereby enabling them to repair the rejection of the discursive community at the ball within the discursive community of their relationship.

The couple's banter and quarreling constitute, in essence, a part of the routine that supports the "social compact" within their own private discursive community to validate deferred identity. The potential to realize deferred identity, in other words, can be perceived as authentic if it is able to provoke the outrage of the partner. This outrage over events that have not actually taken place serves the additional function of reassuring the partner that there is a vehement investment in the relationship. This signaling of investment is essential in allaying the *fear* that the jealous outbursts of each partner expresses. The dissolution of that marital union would essentially constitute a double foreclosure – the loss of subjectivity that has been foregone in favor of the marriage, and the subsequent loss of subjectivity that has been invested. The conflict, then, emerges as a conspiratorial conflict – one that that the partners engage in towards the common goals of stabilizing personal identity that otherwise remains unexpressed, but also of strengthening the marital union itself:

> [...] sie redeten von den geheimen Bezirken, nach denen sie kaum Sehnsucht verspürten und wohin der unfaßbare Wind des Schicksals sie doch einmal, und wär's auch nur im Traum, verschlagen könnte. Denn so völlig sie einander in Gefühl und Sinnen angehörten, sie wußten, daß gestern nicht zum erstenmal ein Hauch von Abenteuer, Freiheit und Gefahr sie anrührt; bang, selbstquälerisch, in unlauterer Neugier versuchten sie eines aus dem anderen Geständnisse hervorzulocken und, ängstlich näher zusammenruckend, forschte jedes in sich noch irgendeiner Tatsache, so gleichgültig, nach einem Erlebnis, so richtig es sein mochte, das für das Unsagbare als Ausdruck gelten, und dessen aufrichtige Beichte sie vielleicht von einer Spannung und einem Mißtrauen befreien könnte, das allmählich unerträglich zu werden anfing. (13)[22]

The crisis engendered at the ball continues to emerge in the guise of a more deeply rooted marital discord as the couple extends their quarrel to earlier, *potential* moments of indiscretion; infidelities that each had had the chance to commit, and yet significantly, had chosen not to. Like the falsified accounts of "amorous encounters" at

[22] "They spoke of those mysterious regions [for which they scarcely felt any desire, and] towards which the incomprehensible wind of fate might some day drive them, even if only in their dreams. For though they were united in thought and feeling, they knew that the preceding day had not been the first time that the spirit of adventure, freedom and danger had beckoned them. [Anxiously moving towards one another], each sought with disingenuous curiosity to draw out confessions from the other. Anxiously, they searched within themselves for some indifferent fact, or trifling experience, which might express the inexpressible, and the honest confession of which might relieve them of the strain and the suspicion which were becoming unbearable" (8-9) [My correction to the English translation].

the masked ball, these "infidelities" over which the couple argues never actually took place, and indeed, never had any potential for fulfillment, but took place only in the minds of each. In Albertine's case, she had had the briefest of infatuations – lasting a single day – with a naval officer she had seen while on holiday in Denmark the previous summer. As she explains to Fridolin, they had only had a single direct encounter, when she had run into him one morning, and the sum of their interaction had been that they had each scowled at one another:

> „Den ganzen Tag lag ich traumverloren am Strand. Wenn er mich riefe – so meinte ich zu wissen – ich hätte nicht widerstehen können. Zu allem glaubte ich mich bereit; dich, das Kind, meine Zukunft hinzugeben, glaubte ich mich so gut wie entschlossen, und zugleich – wirst du es verstehen? – warst du mir teuerer als je. Gerade an diesem Nachmittag, du mußt dich noch erinnern, fügte es sich, daß wir so vertraut über tausende Dinge, auch über unsere gemeinsame Zukunft, auch über das Kind plauderten, wie schon seit lange nicht mehr. Bei Sonnenuntergang saßen wir auf dem Balkon, du und ich, da ging er vorüber unten am Strand, ohne aufzublicken, und ich war beglückt, ihn zu sehen. Dir aber strich ich über die Stirne und küßte dich aufs Haar, und in meiner Liebe zu dir war zugleich viel schmerzliches Mitleid." (14)[23]

[23] "That whole day I lay on the beach, lost in dreams. Had he called me – I thought – I could not have resisted. I thought I was ready for anything. I had practically resolved to give up on you, the child, my future, and at the same time – if you can understand it? – you were dearer to me than ever. That same afternoon – surely you remember – we discussed many things very intimately, among others our common

Albertine does not act upon her impulses, if any action were in fact possible, since the naval officer does not show any interest in her whatsoever. The "Infidelity" is nothing more than a fantasy, and Albertine describes the end of her infatuation in these terms:

> "Nichts weiter. Ich weiß nur, daß ich am nächsten Morgen mit einer gewissen Bangigkeit erwachte. Wovor mir mehr bangte – ob davor, daß er abgereist, oder davor, daß er noch da sein könnte –, das weiß ich nicht, das habe ich auch damals nicht gewußt. Doch als er auch mittags verschwunden blieb, atmete ich auf." (15)[24]

Fridolin's description of his "infatuation" is very different from Albertine's, and reveals his much diminished ability to sublimate his impulses when compared with his wife, whose infatuation took place only in her mind. Fridolin's voice is "slightly hostile," as he gives his account of meeting a "woman" on the beach. That account is replete, with interjected fantasy (both in the quality of that account and its content) and reveals that rather than having been involved in a potentially romantic encounter, Fridolin had trapped a fifteen year old girl on the ledge of a bathing hut:

> „Ein Zittern ging durch ihren Leib, als müßte sie sinken oder fliehen. Doch da sie auf dem schmalen Brett sich doch nur ganz langsam hätte weiterbewegen können, entschloß sie sich innezuhalten, – und stand nun da, zuerst mit einem erschrockenen,

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future, and our child. At sunset you and I were sitting on the balcony, when down on the beach, he passed without looking up. I was extremely thrilled to see him, but I stroked your forehead and kissed your hair, and my love for you was both sorrowful and compassionate" (10).

[24] "That's all. I only know that I woke the next morning with a sort of restless anxiety. I don't know now and didn't know then what I was afraid of – that he had left or that he might still be there. But when he didn't appear that afternoon, I breathed a sigh of relief'" (translation mine).

> dann mit einem zornigen, endlich mit einem verlegenen Gesicht. Mit einemmal aber lächelte sie, lächelte wunderbar; es war ein Grüßen, ja ein Winken in ihren Augen, – und zugleich ein leiser Spott, mit dem sie ganz flüchtig zu ihren Füßen das Wasser streifte, das mich von ihr trennte. Dann reckte sie den jungen schlanken Körper hoch, wie ihrer Schöhnheit froh, und, wie leicht zu merken war, durch den Glanz meines Blicks, den sie auf sich fühlte, stolz und süß erregt. […] Mit einmal aber schüttelte sie heftig den Kopf, löste einen Arm von der Wand, deutete gebieterisch, ich solle mich entfernen; und als ich es nicht gliech über mich brachte zu gehorchen, kam ein solches Bitten, ein solches Flehen in ihre Kinderaugen, daß mich nichts anderes übrigblieb, als mich abzuwenden." (16)[25]

Fridolin's interjected and elaborate interpretation of the girl's facial expressions and gestures merely serve his fantasy and contrast dramatically with Albertine's only description of the naval officer: "'Er lächelte nicht, ja, eher schien mir, daß sein Antlitz sich verdüstere, […]'" (14).[26] Albertine's entire description is of her own inner processes, including the ambiguity of her feelings and her recourse to fantasy as a means of holding

[25] "A tremor passed through her body, as though she wished to drop into the water or run. But as she could move only very slowly in the narrow ledge, she had to stay where she was. She stood there with a face expressing at first fright, then anger, and finally embarrassment. All at once, however, she smiled, smiled marvellously. Her eyes welcomed me, beckoned to me, and at the same time slightly mocked me, as she glanced at the strip of water between us. Then she stretched her young and slender body, glad of her beauty, and proudly and sweetly stirred by my obvious admiration. […] Then she shook her head vigorously, took one arm from the wall and commanded me with a gesture to go away. When I didn't at once obey, her childlike eyes turned on me such a beseeching look that there was nothing for me to do but go" (13).

[26] "'He didn't smile: in fact, it seemed to me that he scowled'" (10).

inexpressible subjectivity. Unlike Fridolin, who gives a mildly erotic description of the young girl's physical appearance and the seductive intent to many of her facial expressions, Albertine's account cedes only a minor role to the officer. She demonstrates a much greater capacity to *sublimate* her impulses. In terms of the current of her subjectivity, she is able to hold conflicted desires and identity adequately in a Narrative domain (fantasy), thereby mitigating the crisis that she experiences. Fridolin, on the other hand, copes with such conflict by elevating his fantasy to the level of a competing reality, compartmentalizing conflicted aspects of experience and subjectivity – a strategy that ultimately drives him into a state of active crisis. This tendency to compartmentalize experience is dramatically illustrated when, in the midst of their quarrel, Fridolin is called away to attend the death of a patient:

> Das Stubenmädchen hatte den Pelz gebracht, Fridolin küßte Albertine ziemlich zerstreut, als wäre das Gespräch der letzten Stunde aus seinem Gedächtnis schon weggewischt, auf Stirn und Mund und eilte davon. (20)[27]

Albertine and Fridolin's infatuations on holiday are harmless in the sense that neither one acted upon his or her desires or impulses. At the same time, both the infatuations, and the quarrel they provoke play a crucial role in the novella – not, as is often assumed, as the substance of the crisis (jealously and infidelity), but as an essential part of the method by which the true underlying crisis is managed. Beginning with the productive role of the infatuation itself, each of these flirtations with indiscretion

[27] "The maid brought his fur coat, and absentmindedly kissing Albertina on her forehead and mouth, as if everything during the last hour had been completely forgotten, he hurried away" (17-18).

represent a compensatory mechanism whereby they are able to maintain the perception that their options have been kept open. This perception then allows both Fridolin and Albertine to *avoid* foreclosing on identity that was deferred when they chose to marry one another. The point of conflict is not truly jealousy or the fear that the partner has a genuine interest in pursuing an extramarital affair, but rather the renewed fear of what is *perceived* to have been lost through the couple's decision to marry one another and establish a family.

The implications of their decision to marry, as well as the more critical life choices that are tied to this decision (i.e., the need for career stability, the decision to raise children, etc.), are perceived by both Albertine and Fridolin to have negatively impacted their potential *social standing*. (As I will show, Fridolin simultaneously entertains the fear that he actually is of a lower standing than Albertine, and in this way, is divided in his apprehension of his potential social standing.) This professed limitation goes beyond a desire for material comfort. As was evidenced at the masked ball, social standing in class-conscious *fin-de-siecle* Vienna has a profound impact on the manner in which each will be permitted to express their identity in the domain of social interaction. Fridolin's sense of loss is centered on his loss of *career* potential and his failure to enhance his status through strategic choices in his profession. His overt focus is on the fact that he has chosen not to pursue a more prestigious academic career as a Doctor of Medicine, electing instead to become a medical practitioner so that he can, in his own words, sustain a more comfortable existence. This decision to practice medicine rather than to become a "man of letters" pits Fridolin's desire for stability and his responsibilities towards his

young family against his desire for a more elevated status –a status to which he must, to some degree, feel he has a justifiable claim.

Fridolin's underlying dissatisfaction with his chosen status is first revealed when he is suddenly called away in the midst of his quarrel with Albertine to attend the deathbed of the Count Councilor. There, he is met by the Councilor's daughter, Marianne, who has been left alone to care for her father in his last days. Although ostensibly operating in his capacity as medical practitioner, Fridolin is nonetheless connected to this family to an unusual degree owing his lengthy involvement with them over the course of the Councilor's protracted illness. The personal and the professional are mingled as Marianne presents Fridolin with news concerning her family, and in particular, her fiancé, Dr. Roediger. The mention of this fiancé and his academic achievements piques Fridolin and fills him with a sense of inferiority:

> Ihr Bräutigam wird wohl bald eine Professur erhalten; an der philosophischen Fakultät liegen ja die Verhältnisse in dieser Beziehung viel günstiger als bei uns! Er dachte daran, daß er vor Jahren auch auch eine akademische Laufbahn angestrebt, daß er auch bei seiner Neigung zu einer behaglicheren Existenz sich am Ende entschieden hatte; – und plötzlich kam er sich dem vortrefflichen Doktor Roediger gegenüber als der Geringere vor. (23-24)[28]

[28] " 'I suppose your fiancé will soon get a professorship. The chances for promotion are more favorable in the faculty of Philosophy than with us in Medicine.' He was thinking that, years ago, he also had aspired to an academic career, but because he wanted a comfortable income, he had finally decided to practice medicine. Suddenly he felt that compared with this noble Doctor Roediger, he was the inferior" (24).

Although the title of *Doktor* and an academic appointment to a professorship would have afforded Fridolin greater prestige,[29] it is also a career goal with less guarantee of financial security and fraught with the risk of potential failure. Fridolin's disparaging observation that an academic career in philosophy is much easier than one in medicine is at once spurious, and revealing of Fridolin's own fears and tendency to avoid challenge. He could only have achieved such an academic title and position by distinguishing himself intellectually and by fighting for recognition among a community of individuals who are both potential peers, but also potential competitors. Fridolin's success as a medical practitioner, by contrast, rests solely upon his capacity to work diligently at an occupation in which his days are "nüchtern und vorbestimmt in Alltagspflicht" (12). [30] Although he justifies his decision not to pursue an academic position by claiming it is a sacrifice he has made for greater financial stability as the provider for a young family, in reality, that choice also stems in part from his own reluctance to take great risks – a reluctance that we will see expressed repeatedly throughout the novella, consistently coupled with Fridolin's doubts as to his own courage.

Fridolin's tendency to seek security and safety, even at the cost of some of the prestige he so earnestly craves, underlies a number of critical encounters throughout the novella. His attempts to renegotiate his identity with regards this basic capacity for risk-taking is repeated so often that it becomes impossible to overlook the fact that his

[29] Fridolin's perception of a lowered social status derives from the fact that the title Doktor was not used for the standard on-call physician, a position that was viewed at the time as simply a trade, not a lettered profession. Instead, the title was reserved only for those who elected to write a doctoral thesis, thereby making a unique contribution to the fund of academic knowledge in the field of medicine. This distinction still survives in countries such as Germany […], where practicing physicians are properly addressed as *Herr* or *Frau Doktor* only if they have completed an academically oriented doctoral thesis in their field.
[30] "[…] soberly and predetermined, in daily routine and work" (7).

fundamental pragmatism, if not outright timidity, has more to do with his failure to achieve greater prestige in his life than the supposed burden of his marriage to Albertine and the founding of a family. Fridolin demonstrates a long-term tendency not only to err firmly on the side of caution, but also to later elaborate on his own involvement in various events in order to conceal the timidity of his actions by greatly embellishing the degree of danger he faced. While Fridolin *recalls* having engaged in high-risk behavior as a youth, for instance, the text reveals that in none of those reported events was there ever more than a whisper of authentic risk, the masculine prestige of each benefiting enormously from the passage of time and Fridolin's exaggerated recollection of them. These reflections themselves often betray an underlying timidity and anxiety, as in the instance when he is reminded of a dalliance he had had with a young woman, who claimed to be engaged:

> […] er verspürte ein sonderbares Herzklopfen – ganz wie einmal vor zwölf oder vierzehn Jahren, als es so heftig an seine Tür gepocht hatte, während das anmutige junge Ding bei ihm war, das immer von einem entfernt lebenden, wahrscheinlich gar nicht existierenden Bräutigam zu faseln liebte; es war auch tatsächlich nur der Briefträger gewesen, der so drohend gepocht hatte. (29)[31]

This tendency to exaggerate both present and remembered situations is demonstrated with even greater clarity when he ruins into a group of students from a

[31] "[…] he felt his heart beating strangely, just as it had on a previous occasion, twelve or fourteen years before. There had been an unusually loud knock on his door while he had had with him a certain charming young creature who was never tired of prattling about her jealous [probably non-existent] fiancé. As a matter of fact, it was only the postman who had knocked in such a threatening manner" (32-33) [omitted in published translation].

fencing fraternity on the street. There, one of the students, who has one eye bandaged from a recent fencing duel and swaggering with his own inflated sense of masculine courage, bumps into Fridolin. Fridolin interprets the incident as a challenge – an assumption that says as much about his desire to view himself as a worthy adversary as it does about the student's intentions – however he reacts not with actions, but with thoughts that reflect both aggravation and timidity (even cowardice), as well as a need to rationalize his reluctance to return what he had thought was a challenge to his masculinity:

> Was ist das, fragte er sich ärgerlich und merkte nun, daß ihm die Knie ein wenig zitterten. Feig -? Unsinn, erwiderte er sich selbst. Soll ich mich mit einem betrunkenen Studenten herstellen, ich, ein Mann von fünfunddreißig Jahren, praktischer Arzt, verheiratet, Vater eines Kindes! – Kontrahage! Zeugen! Duell! Und am Ende wegen einer solchen dummen Rempelei einen Hieb in den Arm! Und für ein paar Wochen berufsunfähig? – Oder ein Auge heraus? – Oder gar Blutvergiftung –? Und in acht Tagen so weit wie der Herr in der Schreyvogelgasse unter der Bettdecke aus braunem Flanell! Feig –? (29)[32]

[32] "What's the meaning of this? he asked himself, and he noticed that his knees were shaking a little. Am I a coward? Oh! nonsense, he assured himself. Why should I go and face a drunken student, I, a man of thirty-five, a practicing physician, a married man and father of a child? Formal challenge! Seconds! A duel! And perhaps because of such a silly encounter receive a cut in my arm and be unable to perform my professional duties? – Or lose an eye? – Or even get blood-poisoning? – And in a week perhaps be in the position of the man in Schreyvogel Strasse under the brown flannel blanket? Coward –?" (33).

Subjectivity is divided in such a way that the same impulse to act rationally and prudently both that which is demanded of him as a father and a husband, and that which prevents him from claiming a more elevated status – in this case, by exhibiting greater masculine virility. Behind the rational response lurks the suspicion that he is *innately* incapable of behaving otherwise which, should it prove true, would render the temporary deferral of identity (elevated status) invalid and foreclose upon it. Fridolin's appeal to responsibility, together with the implied accusation of cowardice that hides behind it, represents a defensive rejection of that aspect of his own subjectivity that wishes to yield to youthful temptation. The inner monologue with which he contravenes the desire for impetuous action, in turn, will become the exaggerated content of later recollection when, just as in the instance of the threatening mail carrier, Fridolin remembers his own emotional responses and thought processes with greater clarity than he does the events themselves. Fridolin's reflexive fear that responsible action may be indistinguishable from *cowardly* action also sparks a subsequent re-defense of his primary identity and a retreat into an inflated memory of his own of bravado as he recalls his own "dueling years":

> Drei Säbelmensuren hatte er ausgefochten, und auch zu einem Pistolenduell war er einmal bereit gewesen, und nicht auf *seine* Veranlassung war die Sache damals gütlich beigelegt worden. Und sein Beruf! Gefahren von allen Seiten und in jedem Augenblick, – man vergaß nur immer wieder dran. Wie lange war es dann her, daß das diphtheritiskranke Kind ihm ins Gesicht gehustet hatte?

Drei oder vier Tage, nicht mehr. Das war immerhin eine

bedenklichere Sache als so eine kleine Sabelfechterei. (29)[33]

This long-standing conflict, in which Fridolin's need to behave responsibly collides with his longing to behave impulsively is further exacerbated by the fact that the rash and impulsive behavior he desires, while somewhat acceptable in youth, becomes a self-destructive behavior with age. The *temporary* foreclosure of subjectivity for the sake of youthful goals (i.e., in suppressing rash action that could threaten the stability of both career and family life), is now threatened with *permanent* foreclosure, since the actions that express that foreclosed subjectivity have become increasingly untenable. The cost of such actions increases in proportion to age not only in terms of financial loss or damage to close relationships, but perhaps most importantly, the loss of status in a society that forgives the sins of youth, but punishes the folly of old age. As a result, those critical aspects of subjective identity that were deferred in youth are now threatened with permanent foreclosure. Fridolin is unconsciously faced with the decision either to act on the temptation to behave impulsively (i.e., youthfully) or to abandon that behavior and reinvest the subjectivity that such behavior expresses by sublimating that current. He must, in other words, accommodate the flow of semiotic current by establishing a new, adequate articulation of subjectivity among the five organizational domains. The rambling, ultimately unfulfilling journey upon which he now embarks represents the effort either to abandon responsibility (thereby demonstrating that identity need not yet

[33] "He had fought three sabre duels, and had even been ready to fight a duel with pistols, and it wasn't at his request that the matter had been called off. And what about his profession! There were dangers lurking everywhere and at all times – except that one usually forgets about them. Why, how long ago was it that that child with diphtheria had coughed in his face? Only three or four days, that's all. Agter all, that was much more dangerous than a little fencing match […]" (33-34).

be foreclosed upon), or to abandon the desire to be free of responsibility (thereby *completing* that foreclosure).

While Fridolin's crisis is a longstanding one that derives not from his current situation, but rather from the underlying makeup of his subjective identity, he focuses the majority of his anxiety and discontent on his relationship with Albertine. This focus is due in part to the fact that Albertine herself shares a form of that crisis, albeit in milder form, and therefore like Fridolin, contributes to an overall atmosphere of anxiety in the relationship. Albertine is confronted with the same desire to obtain a high social standing, however because of the cultural norms and standards of the day, she cannot hope to enhance her status through strategic career choices. Instead, Albertine would have to seek to elevate her social status with a clever match – by marrying into the highest social standing that would be reasonably suitable for a woman of her background. I will examine Albertine's underlying crisis later, when I discuss her dream. For the present moment, what interests us here is that Albertine is *susceptible* to feeling disappointment in her life circumstances and life choices, and that Fridolin is aware of this potential for dissatisfaction.

The financial burden of being the sole provider for a young family plays a considerable role in restricting Fridolin's life choices, thereby limiting his potential career and social advancement. The match itself, however, is also problematic for him since it appears that it is Fridolin who has made the better match, or at the very least, feels as though he has. There is a subtle accusation in the narrative that Fridolin had made the match because of Albertine's youth and inexperience, having being significantly older

when he wooed her (she had just turned seventeen at the time). The perception of such a "mismatch" is doubly indemnifying. Not only does it introduce the anxiety that Albertine might one day realize that she could do better for herself, but it also escalates the degree of Fridolin's crisis concerning his own social standing. The higher his social prestige is, the stronger the legitimacy of his claim to Albertine. Ironically, this situation deepens the paradox he must solve in order to be able to resolve his crisis, for it is precisely in yielding to the temptation to take risks and choose reputation over responsibility that he could enhance his desirability as a match, and thus rectify the (perceived) original inequity in the suitability of the match with Albertine. At the same time now that he is already married to her and has begun a young family with her, it is his capacity to be a responsible and stable provider that best ensures that the partnership will succeed. In this sense, his window of opportunity in which to acquire a higher status is shut, regardless of age. Accordingly, while the perceived discrepancy of their initial standing heightens Fridolin's crisis, it also dictates that the only sensible resolution should be for him to foreclose deferred identity, and to give himself over to his identity as physician, husband, and father.

Fridolin's underlying anxiety as to his adequacy in the relationship with Albertine is expressed in the repeated motif of the white-clad officer. The image is initially introduced during the couple's heated discussion at the narrative's beginning, in which Albertine "confessed" a mild infatuation with a naval officer she had seen at the hotel in Denmark (14-15), and the image of that officer continues to haunt Fridolin throughout his misadventures. The image is repeated, however, at the Court Councilor's flat, where

Fridolin views a painting that was done by the Court Councilor's son, depicting a white-clad officer charging down a hill with saber drawn. The most obvious connection of the officer in the painting is with the officer of Albertine's confession, however a second, and perhaps more potent a correlation can also be drawn to the white frock worn by physicians. That correlation finds echoes in Fridolin's comparison of his profession with the martial pursuits of fencing and dueling made during his encounter with the students as cited above. The double reference expresses not only the "competition" in Fridolin's mind between himself and the white clad Danish officer, but also expresses the conflict between himself as stolid provider and a more virulent but less reliable self. The association that leads from the naval officer, to the officer in the painting, to Fridolin himself, initially drawn by the repetition and close proximity of the images in the text, is made more tangible by Fridolin's own disheartened evaluation of the painting:

> […] Fridolin begab sich ins Nebenzimmer um die ärztliche Todesanzeige abzufassen, drehte die Gasflamme über dem Schreibtisch höher, und sein Blick fiel auf das Bildnis des weißuniformierten Offiziers, der mit geschwungenem Säbel den Hügel hinabsprengte, einem unsichtbaren Feind entgegen. Es war in einen altgoldenen schmalen Rahmen gespannt und wirkte nicht viel besser als ein bescheidener Öldrück. (26)[34]

[34] […] Fridolin went into the adjoining room to write out the official death certificate. He turned up the gaslight over the desk and his eyes fell upon the picture of the white-uniformed officer, galloping down hill, with drawn sabre, to meet an invisible enemy. It hung in a narrow frame of dull gold and rather resembled a modest chromo-lithograph" (27).

This evaluation adds greater emphasis to the connection of the image with Fridolin's self-image when one considers the death certificate, which Fridolin was in the process of filling out for his now deceased patient, is a testament to the fact that medical skills have unavoidably limitations, and are subordinate to death and natural law. Thus like the painting, Fridolin's charge against his unseen enemy (the diphtheria bacillus, for instance, and possibly some more worthy rival for Albertine's affections) is of uncertain outcome – possibly a charge into thin air. Like the painting as well, the gilded frame of an exaggerated self-presentation may simply reveal in a more poignant fashion the inadequacy of what has been framed. Finally, like the promising youthful painter, Marianne's brother, who was driven from the family as a failure and whom the father pretends is dead. Fridolin, (or that aspect of his subjectivity that is threatened with foreclosure), may disappear into obscurity and be lost, denied by the responsible husband and father that remains:

> Der Bruder lebte jetzt irgendwo im Auslande, da drin in Mariannens Kabinett hing ein Bild, das er im Alter von fünfzehn Jahren gemalt hatte. Es stellte einen Offizier dar, der einen Hügel hinuntersprengt. Der Vater hatte immer getan, als sähe er das Bild überhaupt nicht. Aber es war ein gutes Bild. Der Bruder hätte es schon weiterbringen können unter günstigern Umständen. (22-23)[35]

[35] "Her brother was now living somewhere abroad. A picture that he had painted when he was fifteen was hanging over there in Marianne's room. It represented an officer galloping down a hill. Her father had always pretended not to see it although it wasn't bad. Oh yes, if he'd had a chance her brother might have made something of himself" (23).

The brother's failure to make something more successful of himself expresses Fridolin's fear that he, too, will come no further in life. The expression is a *displaced*, expression of Fridolin's fear that his youthful plans to achieve a higher professional and social prestige are no longer viable. The fact that the brother is denied and treated as though dead by the father has an even greater significance here, and it articulates the essence of Fridolin's crisis. He must foreclose on his undeveloped and youthful ambitions and embrace his identity as husband, father, and provider. This crisis – "mid-life crisis" –is in essence a traumatic crisis that results from a confrontation with death. It does not truly represent a fear that one is physically mortal, however, but in a much larger sense, it is a fear of a death of subjectivity. The central crisis depicted in the novella is the crisis of a man locked in a life or death struggle, who must find a way to preserve not biological existence, but instead his experience of that existence – the cohesion of his own subjectivity. Thus Fridolin sets off onto his journey into night, facing "ewigen Gesetze Verwesung und Zerfall" (27)[36], lured into temptation by the deceptive awakening of what has been foreclosed upon for some time: "[…] als wäre wirklich schon der Frühling da und die trügerisch-warme Luft nicht schwanger von Gefahren" (27).[37] Not yet lost to him, those moribund expressions of subjectivity remain either to be abandoned or assimilated in a modified form. In either case, as with the Court Councilor, a last visit to determine the status of life or death is a part of his obligations, regardless whether he finds the patient dead or alive.

[36] "[…] decay and decomposition, according to eternal laws" (30).
[37] "[…] just as if Spring had actually arrived and no danger were lurking in the deceptive, warm air" (30).

3.2 The Origin of Ambiguity and the Demand for Structural Reorganization

Fridolin's traumatic crisis arises out of conflict between competing manifestations of subjectivity; subjectivity characterized by staid responsibility and stability on the one hand, and by spontaneous change and open possibilities on the other. In terms of systemic conflict, we know that identity that is socially manifested in the Communicative Domain can be traced back through successive articulations or dispositions in the preceding organizational domains. In Idiolect, subjectivity is articulated as the objectified 'subject,' expressed within the individual's apprehension of symbolized meaning. Subjectivity that is precluded from Idiolect by the existent terms and relations of that domain may also be articulated in a Narrative domain where alternative symbolized forms are expressed either consciously (as active, creative processes and as fantasy) or unconsciously (as dream or as semiotic overflow). Prior to its symbolized articulation, subjectivity is expressed within the Self/Other distinction of the Ethical domain and even prior to that, in the dispositions and spatial mapping of the Epistemic domain.

Given the manner in which an overflow of the semiotic current behaves, we would expect Fridolin's conflict to be expressed somatically (overflow in the Epistemic), as a loss of the boundaries between Self and Other (overflow in the Ethical), as competing apprehensions of reality and identity, as competing manifestations of the *subject* (Idiolect and Narrative), and/or as competing discourses (discursive practices) representing that identity (Communicative). In fact, some elements of all of these types of overflow emerge and are manifested throughout the novella. Somatic disruption is articulated as an overt fear of contagion, as already observed in Fridolin's encounter with

the fencing fraternity described above. This fear of infection, which culminates in a self-diagnosis of somatic illness at the end of the third chapter, itself reflects a preoccupation with death as the invasion of what had hitherto been Other upon the Self (instability of the Self/Other distinction) both in the sense of physical death, and more importantly, the "death" of deferred subjectivity. In the symbolized domains, Fridolin's crisis is manifested as competing instances of symbolized identity; one articulated in Idiolect (primary identity), and the other articulated through the diversion of the semiotic current in a Narrative domain (deferred identity). As a result of an overflow of the semiotic current, that Narrative domain vies with Idiolect for dominance as Fridolin's primary symbolized apprehension of meaning during his crisis. Both articulations of identity in turn, are alternately presented in the Communicative domain. While I will look at each of these five domains, I will begin with identity that is expressed in symbolized terms (i.e., in Idiolect, the Narrative, and the Communicative domains), and reference overflow in the preceding domains as evidence of it arises.

The Narrative domain is a domain in which semiotic current can either be actively or passively dissociated from the primary semiotic current and accommodated via, a diverted semiotic channel, in an alternate symbolized domain until a more adequate expression for conflicted subjectivity in Idiolect can be devised. The unmediated passage of current from the Ethical into the Narrative, accounts for the emergence of unconscious (i.e., pre-symbolic) contents in the Narrative, which enables the Narrative domain to play a critical role in maintaining the integrity of subjectivity. Situated side by side with Idiolect as a (consciously or unconsciously) dissociated, symbolized domain, the

expression of symbolized meaning in a Narrative domain allows the individual to alternate between expressions of subjective identity that both compete with one another and compliment one another.

In alternating between Idiolect and various Narrative domains, the individual is able to "compare" her current apprehension of "reality," meaning, and identity with alternate apprehensions. That "comparison" occurs not through a 'psychologized' act of judgement, but simply through the experience of increased or decreased tension in the semiotic current in response to various articulations of symbolized meaning and identity. In terms of the fantasy that Fridolin and Albertine act out at the masquerade, the expression of deferred identity held in a Narrative domain was rejected within the discursive community of the masked ball, thereby demonstrating the *inadequacy* of subjective identity as it was expressed there. This rejection in the Communicative domain impedes the passage of the semiotic current, disrupting subjectivity throughout the circuitous semiotic channel. In Fridolin's case, rejection in the Communicative domain and the invalidation of deferred identity threatens that identity with foreclosure.

Even at the level of symbolized meaning, the resolution of conflicted identity is complex, involving many layers of meaning, categorization, and the interrelationship among all instances of terms both within a field of symbolized meaning, and within the temporal succession of symbolized terms as they are gradually altered over time. Beneath manifestations of identity such as career, spouse, or social standing, for example, lie oppositions that are more central to basic, *core identity*, including young or old, successful or unsuccessful, and ultimately, good or bad. Unlike the distinction between a

medical practitioner and a professor of medicine – an opposition that can be *perceived* as finding its expression in tangible, "real-world" entities – the appositive separation of *young / old* establishes symbolized terms that express can be called a *res nulla* or *non-entity*; that is, a symbolic object that does not represent a concretized entity. The value of the *res nulla* is determined within the discursive community based on its function or pragmatic value within the social community. Both 'young' and 'old,' for instance, are delimited by the anticipated lifespan of an individual, as well as the span of her productivity in a given social community (capacity to work, bear children, etc.). Since all instances of signification are arbitrary, the *res nulla* is no less valid than any other signifier. The non-entity distinguishes itself, however, in that it is not readily associated with irreducible somatosensory experience that enables us to lay claim to validity as an external *entity*. The definition of the *res nulla* often differs markedly from community to community, or from circumstance to circumstance within a given community, and therefore can be more readily *perceived* and *argued* to be arbitrary. This weakened appeal to somatosensory experience results in a much higher incidence of discord over the value it is assigned.

Mid-life crisis arises in the ambiguous area surrounding the distinction 'young' and 'old.' As with all socially defined non-entities (*res nullae*), no somatosensory experience *discretely* characterizes that distinction. While the extremes of the human life-span may be unambiguously characterized as 'young' or 'old,' the transition from one to the other is a slowly evolving process in which the individual's *claim* to youth is increasingly challenged and rejected in experience, and in particular, in the

Communicative domain. As such, two diametrically opposed characteristics exist side by side for a time as a competitive fluctuation of subjectivity until the individual herself resolves that conflict by selecting a discrete point in her lifespan (whether consciously or unconsciously) when she begins to regard *herself* as old. She is thereby confronted with two difficulties – that of reorganizing symbolized identity around a new underlying category (i.e., from young to old), and that of determining a placement for the distinction in the continuum of her existence. The process of aging itself is a continual process with only two discrete points – the terminal points of birth and of death – however the distinction of young and old is a *dichotomous division* that can only be argued as; (*if* young=TRUE, *then* old=FALSE); or (*if* young=FALSE, *then* old=TRUE).

In *Traumnovelle,* Fridolin has entered a period of life when the opposition of *young / old* begins to become unstable and to fluctuate. His ability to maintain *deferred* identity in the Narrative domain (identity he might potentially realize) is itself linked with this distinction, since aging often leads to the closing off of such possibilities. His crisis is likewise linked with other *res nulla* oppositions such as *successful / unsuccessful*, *desirable / undesirable* (as a partner), etc. As Fridolin is compelled to foreclose upon deferred identity, symbolized identity in Idiolect (the subject) is reconfigured in relation to these *deeper* aspects of identity as well – young/old, successful/unsuccessful, desirable/undesirable, etc. The forfeiture of surface expressions of identity demands, in this case, a large-scale reorganization of subjectivity that will disrupt the terms in the present field of symbolized meaning. That abrupt reorganization will also open a gap in the gradual temporal succession of symbolized terms, disrupting the symbolized terms of

Idiolect in two dimensions – the contemporary field of meaning and the temporal succession of symbolized meaning as it evolves.

In Fridolin's crisis – a traumatic crisis – reanalysis is difficult and the lateral oscillation between Idiolect and the Narrative domain and eigenstates of subjective identity continues for an extended period of time, interjecting an awareness of the ambiguity (and hence, the conflict) of meaning. Traumatic crisis represents an *attenuation* of the natural process of signification in which sub-processes that otherwise remain largely transparent to human perception are left unresolved for an extended period of time. The potential duration of that process forms a continuum that extends from instantaneous resolution (zero attenuation) through the failure to find resolution at all (infinite attenuation), and the point at which an attenuation of the semiotic process becomes *trauma* cannot be precisely defined. (Trauma, in other words, is itself a *res nulla,* as the difficulty in establishing an adequate definition for that experience palpably demonstrates.) The degree of disruption that arises depends upon the degree to which those processes are attenuated and the difficulty of resolution. In terms of this model then, trauma is wholly defined by subjective experience within the natural processes by which heterogeneous experience establishes itself in the structures of the semiotic system. What we observe in Fridolin's wavering perspective is nothing more than the attenuation of an oscillation that defines the manner in which all meaning comes into being; an oscillation that shows us how our perceptions of "reality" are no more substantial, and no more stable than a dream.

Fridolin's traumatic crisis arises when subjectivity that had, for a time, been adequately held in a Narrative domain as deferred (i.e., potential) identity, has been rejected in the Communicative domain, and hence, invalidated. It remains for him now, either to find social acceptance of that rejected identity, thereby restoring its validity, or to make the decision to foreclose upon it, accepting that identity as potential that is *lost*. The second and third chapters of the novella focus on this quest for resolution, in which he seeks various forms of social contact in a compulsive, crisis-driven manner. Having been called away from his quarrel with Albertine to attend the Court Councilor's deathbed, he finds himself unwilling or unable to return home. Instead, he is drawn into a series of encounters and misadventures that appear to present him with the opportunity to realize deferred identity. At the same time, his impulse to give in to temptation is countered by inner reason, a sense of responsibility and ultimately, an unwillingness to *act* on those impulses. Thus divided, Fridolin cannot fully manifest *either* aspect of identity; neither that of mature responsibility and stability, nor of youthful impetuosity and spontaneity. The two remain locked in a fluctuating, covalent relationship with one another, working together to create a suspended reality.

The re-emergence of deferred identity is represented in the narrative by the motif of 'awakening spring' and the arrival of the *Föhn* – a warm, southerly wind. Chapter two begins with a reference to this awakening as Fridolin leaves Albertine to go to the Court Councilor's:

> Auf der Straße mußte er den Pelz öffnen. Es war plötzlich Tauwetter eingetretten, der Schnee auf dem Fußsteig beinah

> weggeschmolzen, und in der Luft wehte ein Hauch des
> kommenden Frühlings. (20)[38]

These references to spring and the thaw appear repeatedly throughout the chapter in gradually intensified form and their symbolism is twofold – both positive and negative. In positive terms, the spring season is associated with youth, or here, the *re-emergence* or *reawakening* of youth, as well as with love and new relationships. It is not difficult to correlate this with the re-emergence of identity that itself was deferred in youth – identity that is resurging now that it is threatened with permanent foreclosure. At the same time, the image of spring with its thawing wind (Föhn) is also somewhat sinister. The resurgence of deferred identity is deceptive – a kind of seduction – however it cannot truly be reclaimed. Foreclosure is immanent, as is the "death" of that identity, even if Fridolin should choose to act on his impulses to claim it. The warming breeze awakens an identity that will ultimately perish, and accordingly, that *Föhn* is described as being "pregnant with danger":

> Auf beschatteten Bänken saßen da und dort ein Paar eng
> aneinandergeschmiegt, als wäre wirklich schon der Frühling da
> und der trügerisch warme Luft nicht schwanger von Gefahren.
> (27)[39]

The notion of contagion borne on the wind is not new here. At one time, the Föhn was even blamed for having brought the plague to Europe, and thus the 'awakening of

[38] "When Fridolin reached the street, he unbuttoned his coat. It had suddenly begun to thaw; the snow on the sidewalk was almost gone, and there was a touch of spring in the air" (19).
[39] "As he walked through Rathaus Park he noticed here and there on benches standing in the shadow, that couples were sitting, clasped together, just as if Spring had actually arrived and no danger were lurking in the deceptive, warm air" (30).

spring' acts as a covalent signifier intertwining the pursuit of renewed youth with a sense of immanent danger. The contagion that it brings in the form of reawakened identity constitutes the infection of primary identity – Self – with semiotic contents that had been Other, relegated to a Narrative domain as potential but ultimately unrealized subjectivity. Should Fridolin choose to act on reawakened identity – identity that itself is doomed to extinction – this "infection" or destabilization of the Self/Other distinction, in turn, could threaten primary identity with "death" – that is, with the annihilation of Self and subject as they are presently manifested. He could, in other words, destroy that which he has in the pursuit of what which he has already given up. In this sense, Fridolin's repeated concerns about contagion as a danger that he and others might carry silently within themselves actually reference the lurking danger of deferred identity (i.e., his having been coughed upon by a child with diphtheria four days prior, the threat of infection from a dueling wound, etc.). That identity can awaken to begin a "disease process" that, if not halted, could lead to the 'death' of primary identity and his current life (marriage, career, etc.) before being itself foreclosed upon, costing him everything.

The awakening of spring and the arrival of the *Föhn* are an expression of the emergence of competing subjective identity. The resulting fluctuation between conflicted aspects or manifestations of identity is itself expressed by the instability in Fridolin's own perceptions of his role as husband and, in particular, as physician. Both of these roles are alternately inflated and depreciated as he oscillates between primary identity and deferred identity. The oscillating inflation and depreciation begins with Fridolin's arrival at the Court Councilor's apartment, where he distances his role as physician and as husband

from his integral identity. This distancing is an essential precondition to the emergence of deferred identity, since in this way, both deferred identity and realized identity are placed on an equal and competitive standing. Fridolin's identity as physician, in other words, becomes a kind of theatrical role that is no more substantial than the role of professor, dandy, or duelist he has deferred. When he enters the home of the Court Councilor and approaches the Councilor's daughter, Marianne, we see a first, subtle form of distancing in the narrative's use of the term "the physician," rather than of his name:

> Als der Arzt eingetretten war, hatte sie den Blick zu ihm gewandt,
> doch in der kärglichen Beleuchtung sah er kaum, ob ihre Wangen
> sich rötteten wie sonst, wenn er erschien. (21)[40]

This reference to "the physician" might not be significant were it not for the fact that this depersonalized reference is unique within in the novella, where he is otherwise referred to simply as Fridolin. In addition, the novella is written largely from the narrative perspective of an *inner monologue* that reflects Fridolin's thoughts, perceptions, and emotions. With the possible exception of Albertine, we are never provided with the inner perspectives of other characters and therefore we would not expect the use of the depersonalized reference, "the physician," to represent a shift in the narrative towards Marianne's perceptions. This idiosyncratic use of the depersonalized reference renders Fridolin's role as physician an activity that is distinct from his core identity, and that might be exchanged for another role as one might exchange a costume. Indeed, this very

[40] "When the doctor entered she looked up, but because of the dim light he could not see whether she had blushed, as usual, when he appeared" (20).

parallel is drawn later in the novella, when Fridolin compares the donning of a costume to the donning of his white physician's coat every morning:

> Fridolin fiel ein, daß es höchste Zeit war, sich zu maskieren. Er zog den Pelz aus, fuhr in die Kutte, geradeso wie er jeden Morgen auf der Spitalabteilung in die Ärmel seines Leinenkittels zu schlüpfen pflegte [...]. (48)[41]

This devaluation of primary identity and the concurrent "awakening" of deferred identity leads to a competitive fluctuation between the two, as each manifestation of identity is alternately diminished and augmented in his perceptions. This initial devaluation of Fridolin's role as physician (primary identity) is emphasized by the very situation that has brought him to the Court Councilor's home. He has been called there to attest the death of his patient and in this sense, Fridolin's role as physician is invalidated to some degree by his inability to keep his patient alive. No medical art is of use to him in this situation and his *role* as physician is reduced to a few mechanical gestures, the passive function of witnessing, and the formal termination of the physician-patient relationship through the signing of the death certificate. The gestures with which Fridolin performs his routine duties have been emptied of meaning or function:

> Er trat an das Kopfende des Bettes, berührte mechanisch die Stirn des Toten, dessen Arme, die in weiten offenen Hemdärmel über der Bettdecke lagen, dann senkte er mit leichtem Bedauern die

[41] "Fridolin realized that it was high time to put on his costume. He took off his fur coat and stepped into the cassock, just as he slipped into the sleeves of his white linen coat every morning in his ward at the hospital" (62).

> Schultern, steckte die Hände in die Taschen seines Pelzrockes [...]. (21)[42]

These circumstances dramatically articulate the devaluation of Fridolin's role as physician, although that devaluation actually originates with his underlying traumatic crisis. This initial devaluation is followed by repeated efforts to re-establish the value and, in particular, the status and authority of that role, however with primary identity reduced to the insubstantial level of deferred identity, Fridolin's efforts amount to an impotent, even inappropriate assertion of medical authority. In his interactions with the Councilor's daughter, Marianne, for example, he utilizes his prerogative as physician to depersonalize her and to enhance his own privilege with her by viewing her as a patient and evaluating the status of her physical health. In so doing, Fridolin takes on the role of protector, while at the same time establishing a seemingly justifiable basis for what would otherwise be socially unacceptable intimacy:

> Wie erregt sie spricht, dachte Fridolin, und wie ihre Augen glänzen! Fieber? Wohl möglich. Sie ist magerer geworden in der letzten Zeit. Spitzenkatarrh vermutlich. (23)[43]

> […] natürlich ist auch Hysterie dabei. (25)[44]

[42] "He stepped to the head of the bed and mechanically placed his hands on the forehead of the dead man and on the arms which were lying on the bedspread in loose and open shirt sleeves. His shoulders drooped with a slight expression of regret. He stuck his hands in the pockets of his coat […]" (20).
[43] "How excitedly she speaks, Fridolin thought, and how bright her eyes are! Is it fever? Quite possibly. She's grown much thinner. Probably has tuberculosis" (23).
[44] "Of course, she is hysterical, he remarked to himself […]" (26).

Fridolin also utilizes his prerogative as physician to justify behavior and actions that, in truth, have no valid medical basis, and that are otherwise inappropriate. As he waits with Marianne for the arrival of other family members, Fridolin begins to feel stifled by the tension both of abiding with the corpse and of the rising temptation to respond to Marianne's hysterical overtures towards him. In order to alleviate his own discomfiture over this tension, he opens a window without asking, inappropriately availing himself of the "dispassionate intimacy" accorded a physician in his interactions with a patient:

> Er warf einen Blick nach dem geschlossenen Fenster und, ohne vorher um Erlaubnis zu fragen, wie in Ausübung eines ärztlichen Rechtes öffnete er beide Flügel und ließ die Luft herein, die, indes noch wärmer und frühlingshafter geworden, einen linden Duft aus den erwachenden, fernen Wälder mitzubringen schien. Als er sich wieder ins Zimmer wandte, sah er die Augen Mariannes wie fragend auf such gerichtet. (24)[45]

By misapplying his prerogative as physician, Fridolin is able to subsume his inappropriate actions and impulses within his primary identity as responsible husband, father, and physician. Thus in alternation with the intermittent devaluation of his role as physician (a devaluation of primary identity), Fridolin also inflates that role, along with the rights and privileges that it accords, thereby making room for deferred identity to be

[45] "He glanced at the closed window, and without asking for permission but availing himself of his privilege as a doctor, he opened both casements and let some air in. It had become even warmer and more spring-like, and the breeze seemed to bring with it a slight fragrance of the distant awakening woods. When he turned back into the room, he saw Marianne's eyes fixed upon him with a questioning look" (25).

accommodated within it in an uneasy covalent relationship. By so doing, Fridolin is able ward off temptation (or at least the accusation of wrongdoing), while at the same time sanctioning the liberties he takes as he yields to salacious impulses. A precondition for covalent signification (i.e., ambiguity) is established whereby Fridolin is able to interpret Marianne's behaviour as illness, while alternately interpreting that same flush and excitement as passion. The gesture of opening the casements is likewise ambiguous. It is not really appropriate for Fridolin to open them by appealing to his role as physician, since he has no patient who could benefit by his actions. Rather, it is a prerogative that would be more appropriate for Marianne's lover or fiancé. The familiarity he usurps therefore comes about through the merger of the (apparent) rights of the physician and those of a lover. Indeed, the reference to the awakening of spring, this time encompassing a broader radius to include the distant woods, indicates the growing strength of deferred identity, and even Fridolin's active participation in inviting it.

Kubrik's interpretation of the novella makes even clearer Fridolin's potential use of the physician's prerogative to merge conflicted desires – the desire to maintain his present identity, relationship, etc., and the desire to act on dangerous impulses and realize deferred identity. Indeed, in the film, *Eyes Wide Shut*, Alice recognizes the potential to misuse the "dispassionate intimacy" of the physician-patient relationship in order to legitimize otherwise inappropriate impulses when she accuses Bill of having an ambiguous motivation when he examines his female patients:

"Now try to be honest. When some really great-looking woman comes in to your office to have her tits checked out, don't you ever think about screwing her?"

"Come on, give me a break. I'm a doctor. It's all very impersonal. And anyway my insurance requires that a nurse is always present."

"You're being evasive. When you're feeling her tits, is it never any more than sheer professionalism?

"Basically, that's all it is."

"Just basically?"

"Oh, come on. There are no absolutes in anything"

(Kubrick *Eyes Wide Shut*)

Bill's defense that these examinations always take place in the presence of a (female) witness betrays his inability to consciously apprehend the (potential) misuse of his office. It is irrelevant whether he follows all of the appropriate protocol governing the physician-patient relationship. Alice's accusation is not one of inappropriate action, but of inappropriate intent. (The viewer never discovers whether these accusations are founded.)

Seizing the prerogative of the physician to justify impermissible familiarity and the crossing of social boundaries is one method of at least temporarily merging conflicted subjectivity. By inflating the status and authority due him as a physician, Fridolin is able to act out the intimacy with "another woman" that allows him to feel that his options are still open in choosing a partner, while at the same time he avoids placing his marriage in

genuine jeopardy. In addition, this awkward merger of primary with deferred identity allows him to integrate into primary identity some of the prestige he desires of deferred identity. Part of that status rests upon his more stable earning capacity and greater ability as a provider. Based upon the presumption that he can furnish greater financial stability, Fridolin observes that he himself is the better suitor for Marianne, since he possesses greater means to truly care for her than the academian, Dr. Roediger. This assertion enables Fridolin not only to view Roediger as his inferior, but to dismiss his own dreams of attaining a professorship as well:

> Marianne sähe sicher besser aus, dachte er, wenn sie seine Geliebte wäre. Ihr Haar wäre weniger trocken, ihre Lippen rötter und voller. (22)[46]
>
> Also diesen Dozenten wird sie heiraten. Warum tut sie das? Verliebt ist sie gewiß nicht, und viel Geld dürfte er auch nicht haben. Was wird das für eine Ehe werden? (22)[47]

This attempt at integration through the augmentation of his present identity is not sufficient to eliminate Fridolin's doubts as to the worth of that identity, and his denigration of Roediger's academic position is almost immediately followed by the devaluation of his own position as medical practitioner together with the material stability it provides. As cited earlier, Fridolin has a sense that his choice to seek financial security was a compromise for which he sacrificed the prestige of greater personal achievement:

[46] "Marianne would certainly look better, he thought to himself, if she were his mistress. Her hair would be less dry, her lips would be fuller and redder" (22).
[47] "So she is going to marry this instructor! I wonder why? She surely isn't in love with him, and he isn't likely to have much money either. What kind of marriage will it turn out to be?" (22).

> Er dachte daran, daß er vor Jahren auch auch eine akademische Laufbahn angestrebt, daß er auch bei seiner Neigung zu einer behaglicheren Existenz sich am Ende entschieden hatte; – und plötzlich kam er sich dem vortrefflichen Doktor Roediger gegenüber als der Geringere vor. (23-24)[48]

Fridolin inflates the status and authority of his prerogative as physician in order to restore the value of primary identity, while at the same time suffering subsequent disillusionment at his perceived lack of status. The same fluctuation occurs in relation to deferred identity as well, and its relative value is inflated and devalued in much the same way. In this way Fridolin moves between deferred and primary subjective identity, occupying first one, then the other in alternation, he experiences the additional fluctuation within each identity of finding them either adequate or inadequate.

Fridolin Occupies Primary Identity		**Fridolin Occupies Deferred Identity**
(Semiotic Current → Idiolect)		**(Semiotic Current → Narrative Domain)**
Primary Identity is Adequate		Deferred Identity is Adequate
&		&
Deferred Identity is Inadequate		Primary Identity is Inadequate
↕	↔	↕
Primary Identity is Inadequate		Deferred Identity is Inadequate
&		&
Deferred Identity is Adequate		Primary Identity is Adequate

Table 5: Reciprocal relationship of primary and deferred identity.

[48] "He was thinking that, years ago, he also had aspired to an academic career, but because he wanted a comfortable income, he had finally decided to practice medicine. Suddenly he felt that compared with this noble Doctor Roediger, he was the inferior" (24).

Fridolin's occupation of deferred identity essentially represents a return to unencumbered youth with its opportunity and virility, both in terms of potential sexual encounters and in terms of demonstrative masculine conflict such as dueling. Similar to the distortion of primary identity, the distortion of deferred identity constitutes the inflation of the "amorous" situations in which Fridolin finds or places himself. When he occupies deferred identity, his distorted assessment of these "opportunities" masks the fact that each is, in truth, a very sordid kind of affair, often with little or no potential for realization. The reader is made aware of this distortion by the sheer inappropriateness of these various encounters, i.e., in Fridolin's behavior towards Marianne and more significantly, in his distorted perceptions of their interaction. That situation may, at first glance, appear to be morally ambiguous and to possess some real potential as an opportunity for infidelity, since Marianne does indeed make certain romantic overtures towards Fridolin:

> Unwillkürlich legte er seine Hand auf ihren Scheitel und strich ihr über die Stirn. Er fühlte, wie ihr Körper zu zittern begann, sie schluchzte in sich hinein, kaum hörbar zuerst, allmählich lauter, endlich ganz ungehemmt. Mit einemmal war sie vom Sessel herabgelitten, lag Fridolin zu Füßen, umschlang seine Knie mit den Armen und preßte ihr Antlitz daran. Dann sah sie zu ihm auf mit weit offenen, schmerzlich wilden Augen und flüsterte heiß: "Ich will nicht fort von hier. Auch wenn Sie niemals wiederkommen,

> wenn ich Sie niemals mehr sehen soll; ich will in Ihrer Nähe leben." (24)[49]

Marianne repeats this declaration that she is enamored with Fridolin again, even after her fiancé, Dr. Roediger, has arrived at the apartment:

> Wieder ertönte die Türglocke, Doktor Roediger erhob sich und ging öffnen; indessen sagte Marianne, unhörbar fast, auf den Boden blickend: "Ich liebe dich." Fridolin erwiderte nur, indem er, nicht ohne Zärtlichkeit, Mariannens Namen ansprach. (26)[50]

While it appears that Marianne herself desires a relationship with Fridolin, his own observations of the situation give us to realize that these gestures are not what they appear to be on the surface. As he notes, Marianne is hysterical after the death of her father, and her chattering seems delusional. Certainly the timing of the encounter and the presence of Marianne's deceased father in the room make it likely that Marianne's advances express her own traumatic confusion and a realistic need for comfort rather than an authentic romantic interest. In a moral sense, were Fridolin to act on his impulses or even to respond to Marianne's confused overtures, it would constitute a kind of rape, and a gross violation of the physician-patient relationship. At some level, Fridolin himself is aware of the ethical implications of acting on any amorous impulse towards Marianne,

[49] "In spite of himself, he placed his hand on her head, caressing it. […] All at once she slipped down from her chair and lay at Fridolin's feet, clasping his knees with her arms and pressing her face against them. Then she looked up to him with large eyes, wild with grief, and whispered audibly: 'I don't want you to leave here. Even if you never return, if I am never to see you again, I want, at least, to live near you" (25-26).

[50] "Again the doorbell rang and Doctor Roediger rose to answer it. While he was gone, Marianne, with her eyes on the floor, said, almost inaudibly: 'I love you,' and Fridolin answered by pronouncing her name tenderly" (28).

and even as he embraces her and kisses her on the forehead, he is reminded of a similar situation he had read about in a novel in which a young man is seduced at his mother's deathbed:

> Er hielt Marianne in den Armen, aber zugleich etwas entfernt von sich, und drückte beinahe unwillkürlich einen Kuß auf ihre Stirn, was ihm selbst ein wenig lächerlich vorkam. Flüchtig erinnerte er sich eines Romans, den er vor Jahren gelesen und in dem es geschah, daß ein ganz junger Mensch, ein Knabe fast, am Totenbett der Mutter von ihrer Freundin verführt, eigentlich vergewaltigt wurde. (25)[51]

Fridolin's recollection of this incident in the novel is not only associated with the awkward situation in which he finds himself with Marianne. It also immediately brings to mind Albertine, and his own unknown, potential rival, the Danish officer:

> Im selben Augenblick, er wußte nicht warum, mußte er seiner Gattin denken. Bitterkeit gegen sie stieg in ihm auf und ein dumpfer Groll gegen den Herrn in Dänemark mit der gelben Reisetasche auf der Hotelstiege. (25)[52]

Fridolin's thoughts of Albertine at this moment signals the emergence of an aspect of his underlying conflict at which the narrative only hints. Albertine was just

[51] "He put his arms around her in a very hesitating embrace, and almost against his will he kissed her on the forehead, an act that somehow seemed rather ridiculous. He had a fleeting recollection of reading a novel years ago in which a young man, still almost a boy, had been seduced, in fact, practically raped, by the friend of his mother, at the latter's deathbed" (26).

[52] "At the same time he thought of his wife, without knowing why, and he was conscious of some bitterness and a vague animosity against the man with the yellow handbag on the hotel stairs in Denmark" (26-27).

barely seventeen when Fridolin won her hand, while Fridolin was both markedly older and significantly more experienced in terms of previous romantic liaisons. In the disparity of their ages and the degree of their romantic experience lies the suggestion that Fridolin may have unfairly benefited from Albertine's youth when he courted her. Indeed, in having done so, Fridolin may have made the better match of the two, "marrying up" as it were. This dimension of their relationship, which will be more explicitly articulated in Albertine's dream, (see below), adds greatly to Fridolin's insecurity regarding the adequacy of his status. The question of Albertine's relative youth and her essential vulnerability find resonance in Fridolin's encounters throughout the novella, including in his preoccupation with girls of young age (i.e., the girl he traps on the beach in Denmark), or women who are in some way vulnerable (i.e., Marianne).

The lingering suspicion that it might be he who has made the better match by virtue of a slightly unfair advantage, rather than his own innate desirability (i.e., status, virility, courage, etc.) adds a critical dimension to Fridolin's traumatic conflict. The competition between primary and deferred identity consists of more than the fear that he might loose the option to realize aspects of identity that are threatened with foreclosure. Rather, there is a sense that primary identity itself may be threatened by that foreclosure, both because potential identity played a role in making Fridolin appear more attractive as a suitor, but also because primary identity might not have been adequate to win Albertine had she not been rendered vulnerable by her relative youth and lack of experience. (Indeed, Albertine's dream will validate the suspicion that she herself perceives that Fridolin is not all that her initial perceptions made him out to be, whether as a result of

deliberate deception in his part, or as a result of her youthful inability to accurately judge who he was.) In this sense, Fridolin's sudden recollection of the novel in which a youth is seduced by his mother's friend addresses not only Marianne's vulnerability at her father's deathbed, but Albertine's vulnerability when Fridolin courted her as a seventeen year old girl. Underlying Fridolin's adventures then, we can see not only his desire to act out deferred identity, but perhaps his desire to legitimize his claim to Albertine through the realization of that identity and the assertion that he could have won her hand even if she had not been vulnerable.

The background of Fridolin and Albertine's relationship, which is revealed gradually over the course of the novella, shows the reader the significance of deferred identity, and the competing purposes towards which Fridolin works within that relationship. These competing purposes, which drive Fridolin in his nocturnal wanderings, are likewise manifested in his interactions with the various women he encounters, beginning with Marianne. Accordingly, Fridolin's response to the situation with Marianne wavers between acting out the emotional distance of the physician, and returning Marianne's quasi-amorous gestures returned as though he were a potential suitor. Thus, on the one hand, we see Fridolin remain unmoved by Marianne's advances or even a bit repulsed by them:

> Er zog Marianne fester an sich, doch verspürte er nicht die geringste Erregung; eher flößte ihm der Anblick des glanzlos

> trockenen Haares, der süßlich-fade Geruch ihres ungelüfteten Kleides einen leichten Widerwillen ein. (25)[53]

At the same time, he caresses her head and kisses her forehead as though this were an apropriate way to interact with the engaged daughter of a deceased patient. Fridolin even reciprocates in some small measure the grief that Marianne expresses over their immanent separation – grief that, on her part most likely expresses the fact that Fridolin has been helping her with the burden of caring for her father and that, as long as he continued to visit, her father was still alive. Fridolin's regret at their parting is expressed in significantly more muted terms:

> Es ist wohl möglich, daß ich sie niemals wiedersehen werde, denn nun habe ich in diesem Hause nichts mehr zu tun. Ach, wie viele Menschen habe ich nie mehr wiedergesehen, die mir näher standen als sie? (22)[54]

Ultimately the arrival of Marianne's fiancé and extended family members puts an end to the notion that there can be any real romantic tryst between them. As in subsequent encounters, Fridolin's ability to move between primary identity and deferred identity with Marianne rests on the contingency that any "potential partner" be both essentially unavailable, and that they will be either unwilling or unable to pin him to one identity or the other. With Marianne, Fridolin's justification for remaining in his practical role as physician has been stretched to its limits. The arrival of Roediger and Marianne's

[53] "He held Marianne closer, but without the slightest emotion. The sight of her lustreless, dry hair, the indefinite, sweetish scent of her unaired dress gave him a slight feeling of revulsion" (27).
[54] "It's quite possible that I shall never see her again, since there's nothing more for me to do here. Well, many others that I cared for have gone the same way" (22).

aunt and uncle render Fridolin entirely superfluous, generating the perception that the room is now overfilled with people:

> Das kleine Zimmer sah plötzlich wie von Trauergästen überfüllt aus, Fridolin erschien sich überflüssig, empfahl sich und wurde von Roediger zur Tür geleitet […]. (26)[55]

Fridolin leaves Marianne at the home of the Court Councilor and, with the collapse of his fantasized interaction with her (as will be the case when he leaves each of his subsequent encounters), he becomes aware of the limbo state in which his crisis has placed him. What had, in the intensity of the moment, appeared to be an adventure and a possible escape from the tedium of his daily life and responsibilities, now emerges as a kind of enchantment that holds him captive:

> Er selbst erschien sich wie entronnen; nicht so sehr einem Erlebnis als vielmehr einem schwermütigen Zauber, der keine Macht über ihn gewinnen sollte. Als einzige Nachwirkung empfand er eine merkwürdige Unlust sich nach Hause zu begeben. (27)[56]

The "enchantment" under which Fridolin had fallen is a covalent state in which deferred and primary identity exist side by side such that they can neither be merged nor separated from one another. With that "enchantment" having dissipated, Fridolin experiences an upsurge of the negative aspects of his traumatic crisis (i.e., semiotic overflow), including a sense of immanent death, and a fear of loosing Albertine. These fears and an awareness

[55] "The little room suddenly seemed crowded with mourners. Fridolin felt superfluous, took his leave and was escorted to the door by Roediger […]" (28).
[56] "He felt as if he had escaped not so much an adventure as a melancholy spell that should not be allowed to take hold of him. Its only lingering effect was that he felt a strange disinclination to return home" (29). [translation mine]

of his predicament had remained largely concealed while he was at the Court Councilor's since, in his interaction with Marianne he had found a covalent expression for competing subjectivity in the dispassionate intimacy of his role as physician. At the same time, even as he confronts the emptiness of his limbo-state and his anxiety concerning death (both in the literal sense and in the sense of foreclosed identity) he attempts to defer these threats once again by consciously reasserting his youth:

> Und der Tote fiel ihm ein, den er eben verlassen, und mit einigem Schauer, ja nicht ohne Ekel dachte er daran, daß in dem langdahingestreckten mageren Leib unter der braunen Flanelldecke nach ewigen Gesetzen Verwesung und Zerfall ihr Werk schon begonnen hatten. Und er freute sich, daß er noch lebte, daß für ihn aller Wahrscheinlichkeit nach all diese häßlichen Dingen noch fern waren; ja daß er noch mitten in seiner Jugend stand, eine reizende und liebenswerte Frau zu eigen hatte und auch noch einer oder mehrere dazu haben konnte, wenn es ihm gerade beliebte. Zu dergleichen hätte freilich mehr Muße gehört, als ihm vergönnt war […]. (27-28)[57]

Here, as evidence of his youth, Fridolin invokes both his highly desirable wife, and his ability to have any number of other, equally desirable women. These two being

[57] "He was reminded of the dead man he had just left, and shuddered; in fact, he felt slightly nauseated at the thought that decay and decomposition, according to the eternal laws, had already begun their work in the lean body under the brown flannel blanket. He was glad that he was still alive, and in all probability these ugly things were still far removed from him. He was, in fact, still in the prime of his youth, he had a charming and lovable wife and could have several women in addition, if he happened to want them, although, to be sure, such affairs required more leisure than was his" (30-31).

coupled in such a way asserts once again that deferred identity has not yet been foreclosed upon, and indeed, that it can remain, held in a Narrative domain (fantasy) as a legitimate expression of subjectivity that might yet be realized. If the permanent foreclosure of deferred identity were *not* immanent, this assertion would be sufficient and Fridolin should be able to return home with is crisis laid to rest, at least for a time. This is not the case, however. The choice as to whether to foreclose deferred identity or not does not rest with Fridolin alone, but with the discursive community (the Communicative domain) as well. In the Communicative domain, where the assessment and mirroring of others no longer validates his claim to deferred identity, Fridolin is faced with increased pressure to complete that foreclosure, and he must find a more adequate means of holding incommensurate subjectivity than in a Narrative domain as potentially realizable.

The suspension between competing symbolized orders gives Fridolin's experience an unreal or dreamlike quality that is described at various times throughout the novella. Upon leaving the Court Councilor's, for instance, Fridolin experiences a sense of isolation and the eerie lack of reality that renders both the living and the dead somewhat "ghostlike:"

> Fridolin, vor dem Haustür, sah zu dem Fenster auf, das er früher selbst geöffnet hatte; die Flüggel zitterten leise im Vorfrühlingswinde. Die Menschen, die dort oben zurückgeblieben

waren, die lebenden geradeso wie der Tote, waren ihm in gleicher Weise gespensterhaft unwirklich. (26)[58]

This sense of unreality signals the loss of the asymmetry that privileges Idiolect (the seat of primary identity) over Narrative domains (alienated current of subjectivity in which deferred identity is held). Such asymmetry prevents the contents of a Narrative domain (fantasy, dream, speculation, etc.) from undermining the stability of one's own apprehension of symbolized meaning and "reality." The loss of that asymmetry, which is characteristic of traumatic crisis, allows a Narrative domain to vie for dominance with Idiolect, thereby establishing competing Idiolectic domains among which, incommensurate experience is distributed. Such loss of asymmetry not only elevates a Narrative domain so that it competes with Idiolect for ascendancy, but it also diminishes the value of Idiolect, and with it, primary identity and the relationships and responsibilities associated with it. At the same time, the regulative function of the Communicative domain is diminished, since those relationships and responsibilities serve to anchor primary identity in the Communicative domain, thereby validating its primacy. The sense of other-worldliness that Fridolin experiences arises out of the overflow of the semiotic current, its redirection along a diverted (i.e., dissociated) channel in alternation with its passage via the existent, dominant channel. It is not surprising then, that this description sounds so much like dissociation as it is described in trauma research.

[58] "When Fridolin stood on the street in front of the house, he looked up at the window which he himself opened a little while before. The casements were swaying slightly in the wind of early spring, and the people who remained behind them up there, the living as well as the dead, all seemed unreal and phantomlike" (29).

Unable to go home but at the same time, unable and/or unwilling to act on his impulses, Fridolin is caught between competing realities. Until he is able to resolve this crisis and establish the primacy of one symbolized domain over the other, his only alternative is to move in a kind of limbo between them, during which time he repeatedly places himself in the path of temptation, and then abruptly terminates the encounter. Fridolin's "adventures" represent a kind of flight: a flight from marriage and responsibility when he seeks out those adventures in potentially illicit encounters, and a flight from temptation when he abruptly quits those encounters. His repudiation of both identities is succinctly expressed in the description of how he leaves the Court Councilor's, unsure of where he is going, but unable to bring himself to return home:

> Und er beschleunigte seinen Schritt, wie um jeder Art von Verantwortung und Versuchung so rasch als möglich zu entfliehen. (27)[59]

Fridolin will continue to flee both articulations of identity until he can make a decision either to foreclose deferred identity or to abandon his present identity, or optimally, until he is able to find a way to integrate the two within a single symbolized domain.

Fridolin's next encounter is with a prostitute named "Mizzi," and in that encounter, we see many of the same themes recur that have characterized his crisis thus far. The "unreal" ands dreamlike quality of his experiences is reiterated and expanded upon to include not only those individuals whom Fridolin has encountered thus far on that nocturnal journey, but Albertine and his child as well:

[59] "He quickened his steps to escape as rapidly as possible from all responsibility and temptation" (30).

> Er fand sich, mit einem Male, schon über sein Ziel hinaus in einer engen Gasse, durch die nur ein paar armselige Dirnen auf nächtlichen Männerfang umherstrichen. Gespenstisch, dachte er. Und auch die Studenten mit den blauen Kappen wurden ihm plötzlich gespenstisch in der Erinnerung, ebenso Marianne, ihr Verlobter, Onkel und Tante, […]; auch Albertine, die ihm nun im Geist als tief Schlafende, die Arme unter dem Nacken verschränkt, vorschwebte, – sogar das Kind […],– sie alle waren ihm völlig ins Gespenstische entrückt. Und in dieser Empfindung, obzwar sie ihn ein wenig schaudern machte, war zugleich etwas Beruhigendes, das ihn von aller Verantwortung zu befreien, ja aus jeder menschlichen Beziehung zu lösen schien. (30)[60]

This loosening of "all the bonds of human relationships," at least in his mind, frees Fridolin from the need to resolve conflicted subjectivity for a time, as symbolized identity need therefore not find consistent accommodation in the Communicative domain. The severing of all human bonds enables Fridolin to move freely between competing articulations of subjectivity. At the same time, Fridolin's fluctuation between competing symbolized domains makes cohesive social interaction difficult, if not impossible.

[60] "He was in a narrow street in which only a few doubtful-looking women were strolling about in a pitiful attempt to bag their game. It's phantomlike, he thought. And in retrospect the students, too, with their blue caps, suddenly seemed unreal. The same was true of Marianne, her fiancée, her uncle and aunt. […] Albertine, too, whom he could see in his mind's eye soundly sleeping, her arms folded under her head – even his child […] – all of them seemed to belong to another world. Although this idea made him shudder a bit, it also reassured him, for it seemed to free him from all responsibility, and to loosen all the bonds of human relationships" (34-35).

Along with the fluctuation between Idiolect and a Narrative domain, (essentially a competing Idiolectic domain), Fridolin experiences the destabilization of preceding domains (Ethical and Epistemic), which is expressed as a fear of contagion. As Mizzi approaches him, his first impulse is the reflexive fear that she may be suffering from some hidden illness – presumably a sexually transmitted disease:

> Eines der herumstreifenden Mädchen forderte ihn zum Mitgehen auf. Es war ein zierliches, noch ganz jungen Geschöpf, sehr blaß mit rotgeschminkten Lippen. Könnte gleichfalls mit Tod enden, dachte er, nur night *so* rasch. *Auch* Feigheit? Im Grunde schon. (30-31)[61]

Certainly there is a greater than average chance that Mizzi, as a prostitute, is indeed infected with some contagious illness. This realistic basis does not annul the fact that, in his fear, Fridolin himself recognizes one of the traits associated with primary identity that he finds undesirable – cowardice. The renewed awareness of his own tendency towards cowardice / prudence, a leitmotif in the novella, demonstrates that despite whatever *realistic* basis his reticence to act might have, Fridolin's decision as to whether or not to go with Mizzi will be inextricably tied to his anxiety that subjectivity (whether as primary or as deferred identity) could be annihilated. The decision to go along with Mizzi and to follow through with having sexual intercourse would represent Fridolin's fully acting out deferred identity, thereby sowing the seeds of primary identity's demise.

[61] "One of the girls wandering about stopped him. She was still a young and pretty little thing, very pale with red-painted lips. Se also might lead to a fatal end, only not as quickly, he thought. Is this cowardice too? I suppose it really is" (35).

Fridolin's interaction with Mizzi, and his failure to recognize the source of her cordial familiarity with him vividly recalls the masquerade he had attended with Albertine the night before. Like the "red dominoes" of the preceding night, Mizzi affects a familiarity with Fridolin's that is intended both to put him at ease as a potential customer while at the same time, safeguarding both party's anonymity and maintaining an appropriate emotional distance between them. The relationship between a prostitute and her client is characterized, in other words, by a dispassionate intimacy that is not unlike that between the physician and his patient. Mizzi's greeting is anything but personal, and yet as he had with the "red dominoes," Fridolin responds as though she knew and had recognized him:

> Er hörte ihre Schritte, bald ihre Stimme hinter sich. "Willst nicht mitkommen, Doktor?"
>
> Unwillkürlich wandte er sich um. "Woher kennst du mich?" fragte er.
>
> "Ich kenn' Ihnen nicht," sagte sie, "aber in dem Bezirk sind ja alle Doktors." (31)[62]

We can attribute Fridolin's failure to accurately assess Mizzi's familiarity to his desire to see the encounter as something more, as well as to the unconscious nature of the crisis-driven process that impels him to undertake this journey. Certainly it is not the first time that Fridolin has been to a prostitute since, as the narrative reveals, Fridolin had visited

[62] "He heard her steps and then her voice behind him. 'Won't you come with me, doctor?'
He turned around involuntarily. 'How do you know who I am?' he asked.
'Why, I don't know you,' she said, 'but here in this past of town they're all doctors, aren't they?" (35).

them when he attended *Gymnasium*. In fact, Fridolin associates visiting a prostitute with *being* an adolescent, and in this sense, this encounter marks a conscious return to his youth. In this way, Fridolin's visit to Mizzi does serve some function in "restoring his youth" – a time when identity had not yet been deferred and was not yet threatened with foreclosure. Indeed, his interest in her indicates originates with the re-emergence of prior identity:

> Seit seiner Gymnasiastenzeit hatte er mit einem Frauenzimmer dieser Art nichts zu tun gehabt. Geriet er plötzlich in seine Knabenjahre zurück, daß dieses Geschöpf ihn reizte? (31)[63]

Even as he proceeds to follow Mizzi, Fridolin is already aware that he has no intention of acting on his impulses. It appears that although Fridolin repeatedly confronts himself with temptation in the form of what he believes he has given up in order to marry Albertine, he does so with no other objective than to consider its foreclosure. His ultimate objective is to salvage the current of subjectivity that is held as deferred in a Narrative domain (fantasy), however he either does not actually desire the fantasy itself, or if he does desire it, does not regard it as the equal of what he already possesses. As he follows Mizzi, having tacitly indicated that he desires her services, Fridolin thinks to himself how absurd his impulse is:

> Bin ich verrückt? fragte er sich. Ich werde sie natürlich nicht anrühren. (31)[64]

[63] "He had had no relations with a woman of this sort since he had been a student at the Gymnasium. Was the attraction this girl had for him a sign that he was suddenly reverting back to adolescence?" (35).
[64] "Am I mad, he asked himself. Of course I shall have nothing to do with her" (36).

Further, when he arrives at her room, he both wonders at how strange it is that he has come to be there, and unconsciously refuses her advances by withdrawing from them physically:

> Wer auf der Welt möchte vermuten, dachte er, daß ich mich jetzt gerade in diesem Raum befinde? Hätte ich selbst es vor einer Stunde, vor zehn Minuten für möglich gehalten? Und – warum? Warum? Sie suchte mit ihren Lippen die seinen, er bog sich zurück, [...]. (32)[65]

Fridolin's inner ambivalence towards the situation is expressed in the question he asks – "why?" – and can be read in two contradictory ways. Following the observation that he himself had thought it impossible that he would now be with a prostitute, the question, "why?" seems to ask; why had he thought it impossible? With his physical withdrawal from Mizzi, however, it appears equally likely that the question asks; why is he here? The question, "why," forms a covalent bond between opposing impulses – one that asks why he should seek an extramarital encounter, and another that demands to know why not? Thus linked, the two impulses can neither be merged, nor separated from one another, just as primary identity and deferred identity belong to the same semiotic current, and yet cannot be brought together in the existent field of symbolized meaning.

Fridolin's refusal of Mizzi's advances might have signaled a decision to abandon this encounter and perhaps even to permit foreclosure. His pride is once again piqued,

[65] "Who in the world would suspect that I'm here in this room at this moment? Fridolin thought. I'd never have thought it possible an hour or even ten minutes ago. And – why? Why am I here? Her lips were seeking his, but he drew back his head" (37).

however, by Mizzi's not unkindly suggestion that Fridolin's reluctance indicates that he is merely afraid:

> "Du fürchtest dich halt," sagte sie leise, – und dann vor sich hin, kaum vernehmlich, "schad'!"
>
> Dieses letzte Wort jagte eine heiße Welle durch sein Blut. Er trat zu ihr hin, wollte sie umfassen, erklärte ihr, daß sie ihm völliges Vertrauen einflöße, und sprach damit sogar die Wahrheit. Er zog sie an sich, er warb um sie, wie um ein Mädchen, wie um eine geliebte Frau. Sie widerstand, er schämte sich und ließ endlich ab. (32-33)[66]

This accusation, a reiteration of the conflict expressed by his concern that he might be a "coward," repudiates his assertion of deferred identity within the discursive community formed by the two of them, and leads to the resurgence of that identity. Fridolin's subsequent advances upon Mizzi, however, are inappropriate to the circumstances, much as the amorous gestures he returned in response to Marianne's overtures were inappropriate. His romantic behavior and treatment of Mizzi as though she were his "beloved" violates the dispassionate intimacy that the prostitute-client relationship demands and demonstrates in a palpable way the degree to which Fridolin is unconsciously acting out deferred identity. The "reality" upon which Fridolin acts is far removed from the reality shared by others. Mizzi responds to these inappropriate gestures

[66] "'You're simply afraid,' she said softly – and then to herself in a barely audible voice: 'It's too bad.' These last words made the blood race through his veins. He walked over to her, longing to touch her, and declared that he trusted her implicitly […]. He put his arms around her and wooed her like a sweetheart, like a beloved woman, but she resisted, until he felt ashamed and finally gave up" (38).

with resistance – a second rejection within the discursive community that the two of them together form (the Communicative domain). With deferred identity thus rejected, Fridolin returns once again to his (validated) primary identity as provider and protector – an identity that itself reflexively diminishes Mizzi from her inflated role as potential lover to a 'poor, dear thing':

> Das Tor fiel hinter ihm zu, und Fridolin prägte mit einem raschen Blick seinem Gedächtnis die Hausnummer ein, um in der Lage zu sein, dem lieben armen Ding morgen Wein und Näschereien heraufzuschicken. (33)[67]

As the third chapter of the novella comes to a close, Fridolin is not yet aware of what drives him to continue wandering. He will not be able to return home until there has been an escalation, and the forced resolution of his crisis.

3.3 The Foreclosure of Deferred Identity

The third chapter of the novella begins with Fridolin's departure from Mizzi. As he leaves her, he once again finds himself in a state of limbo between identities, faced with the active decision of going home or of continuing his search elsewhere for an opportunity to realize deferred identity. The description of this interim period between encounters reiterates many of the same motifs already observed, including the reemergence of spring, the *Föhn*, and the risk of contagion it carries with it. Indeed, the very first lines of the chapter begin with a reference to the awakening of spring:

[67] "The door closed behind Fridolin and he quickly made a mental note of the street number, so as to be able to send the poor little thing some wine and cakes the following day" (39).

> Es war indes noch etwas warmer geworden. Der laue Wind brachte in die enge Gasse einen Duft von feuchten Wiesen und fernem Bergfrühling. (33)[68]

The dimensions of this "thaw" have once again increased from the awakening of the distant woods mentioned when Fridolin left Marianne, to the awakening of the meadows and the mountains that lie beyond them. With this ever expanding thaw, the danger it brings with it is increased, as is Fridolin's sense of separation from his former life and relationships. That "dream-like" limbo state creates the sense that he now inhabits a separate and distant world. Fridolin situates the genesis of that state in the discussion he had with Albertine, and in their recollections both of the social snub at the *Redout* and of their fantasized infatuations on holiday in Denmark:

> Wie heimatslos, wie hinausgestoßen erschien er sich seit der widerwärtigen Begegnung mit den Alemannen... Oder seit Mariannens Geständnis? – Nein, länger schon – seit dem Abendgespräch mit Albertine rückte er immer weiter fort aus dem gewohnten Bezirk seines Daseins in irgeneine andere, ferne, fremde Welt. (34)[69]

Rather than return home, Fridolin continues on, allowing his gradually escalating crisis to drive him until he reaches a coffeehouse, where he discovers that the pianist performing that evening is a man with whom he had attended medical school – Nachtigall

[68] "Meanwhile it had become even milder outside. A fragrance from dewy meadows and distant mountains drifted with the gentle breezes into the narrow street" (40).
[69] "He felt homeless, an outcast, since his annoying meeting with the students… or was it since Marianne's confession? No, it was longer than that – ever since this evening's conversation with Albertina he was moving farther and farther away from his everyday existence into some strange and distant world" (40).

(in English, “Nightingale”). This encounter is significant. Not only will Nachtigall lead Fridolin to his final quasi-amorous adventures, but like Marianne’s fiancé Roediger, he also represents the kind of life that Fridolin might have led if he had not chosen to pursue the stable and less adventurous path of his primary identity. Like Roediger, Nachtigall confronts Fridolin with a corporeal manifestation of his own deferred identity. Both Nachtigall and Roediger embody a different combination of those character traits that are the focus of his conflict; courage / timidity, and impulsiveness / responsibility, establishing the negative and positive paths along which deferred identity might have led him respectively. Whereas Roediger represents deferred identity in which greater courage is wed to a sense of responsibility, Nachtigall confronts Fridolin with deferred identity that is not only bold, but also destructively impulsive. Each of these men, in other words, demonstrate both the success and the failure that could have been Fridolin’s had he not made the choices that he did, and had he realized identity that now is deferred.

Rather than pursuing an academic career as embodied by Roediger (courage tempered with a sense of responsibility and self-discipline), or that of a medical practitioner (perceived timidity combined with a sense of responsibility), Nachtigall floundered in medical school. Unfocused and undedicated, his “spontaneity” disrupted his studies and disorganized his life:

> Er erinnerte sich, daß Nachtigall das Studium der Medizin schon nach der zweiten, sogar geglückten, wenn auch mit siebenjähriger

> Verspätung abgelegten Vorprüfung in Zoologie, endgültig aufgegeben hatte. (36)[70]

Eventually Nachtigall's unbridled temperament eventually led him to pursue the life of a libertine, playing piano for his more disciplined academic colleagues and acting as the "life of the party." His lack of discipline and unwillingness to work marginalized him within his circle of colleagues even as his spontaneity endeared him to them. His chaotic lifestyle ultimately puts an end to his hopes of a career in the field of medicine. Unlike Fridolin, it appears that Nachtigall was unwilling to defer conflicting aspects of identity in which he was so invested, as is evidenced by his concurrent study both at the school of medicine and the conservatory of music. Similarly, even after his medical studies had foundered and he had essentially abandoned his efforts to become a physician, he continued to associated with his former colleagues for some time, maintaining an ambiguous status among them, no more willing to dedicate himself to his role as musician than he was to his role as medical student / physician.

> Doch noch durch geräume Zeit hatte er sich in Krankenhaus, Seziersaal, Laboratorien und Hörsälen herumgetrieben, wo er mit seinem blonden Künstlerkopf, seinem stets zerknitterten Kragen, der flatternden, einst weiß gewesenen Krawatte eine auffallende, im heiteren Sinn populäre und nicht nur bei Kollegen sondern auch

[70] "He remembered that Nachtigall had definitely given up on the study of medicine after his second preliminary examination in zoölogy, which he had passed although he was seven years late in taking it" (43).

bei manchen Professoren geradezu beliebte Figur vorgestellt hatte. (36)[71]

Nachtigall's cautionary example makes it clear that, had Fridolin refused to defer conflicted identity, he would have had to forego and defer the identity that he now embodies. The attempt to maintain incommensurate manifestations of subjectivity must ultimately fail, leading to the underdevelopment, or even the total loss of *both* manifested identities.

The combination of impetuosity and impulsiveness that drive Nachtigall to abandon his aspirations to become a physician, likewise prevent him from achieving his potential as a pianist. He soon finds himself limited in what he can achieve with that pursuit, even as he attempts to support his own wife and children:

> Schon in seinem Heimatstädtchen hatte er bei einem dort gestrandeten Pianisten die Anfangsgründe des Klavierspielens gelernt, und in Wien als Studiosus medicanae besuchte er zugleich das Konservatorium, wo er angeblich als vielversprechendes pianistisches Talent galt. Aber auch hier war er nicht ernst und fleißig genug, um sich regelrecht weiter auszubilden; und bald ließ er es sich an seinen musikalischen Erfolgen im Kreise seiner

[71] "Since then he had been hanging around the hospital, the dissecting room, the laboratories and classrooms for some time afterwards. With his blond artist's head, his crinkled collar, his dangling tie that had once been white, he had been a striking and, in the humorous sense, popular figure" (43-44).

Bekannten, vielmehr as dem vergnügen, das er ihnen durch sein Klavierspiel bereitete, vollauf genügen. (36-37)[72]

This last sentence, which indicates that Nachtigall's focus on the outward effect that his identity and behavior have on others, sheds light on Fridolin's crisis concerning deferred identity. Like Nachtigall, Fridolin is more preoccupied with the outward presentation of identity than with the relative value of that identity. He appears to be unable or unwilling to sublimate the diverted current of subjectivity that is held in a Narrative domain as deferred identity. During this active phase of his crisis, is fixated on living out the external manifestations of conflicted subjectivity as distinct and incommensurate identities within the Communicative domain. Nachtigall becomes a failure as a result of his efforts to concurrently express conflicted aspects of identity and as a result of his desire to please and impress others rather than achieve something for himself. Fridolin's impulses to prove his youth, virility and courage by dueling and by entering into illicit affairs may likewise lead to his ultimate undoing.

It is his focus on the superficial expression of subjectivity that makes Fridolin more vulnerable than Albertine in terms of psychological stability. As his crisis indicates, he is unable to conceive of a way in which he can accommodate a diverted current of subjectivity other than by realizing it – acting it out – in concrete terms. As we will see, Albertine will be able to integrate her own diverted current of subjectivity by sublimating it as dream using that dream-state as a way to "live out" conflicts, while at the same time

[72] "He had already learned to play in his home town from a pianist stranded there, and while he was a medical student in Vienna he had studied at the Conservatory where he was considered a talented musician of great promise. But here, too, he was neither serious nor diligent enough to develop his art systematically. He soon became entirely content with the impression he made on his acquaintances, or rather with the pleasure he gave them by his playing" (44-45).

safeguarding primary identity and contemporary relationships. Fridolin, on the other hand, is more reliant on the social validation of all aspects of subjectivity so that, like Nachtigall, his success, status and primary relationships are jeopardized by his efforts to act out conflicted subjectivity. The consequences that follow impetuous actions such as giving in to sexual impulses or answering a challenge to his honor with violent gestures are plainly illustrated in Nachtigall's own tale:

> […] er spielte bei solcher Gelegenheit immer nur, was ihm eben und solange es ihm beliebte, ließ sich mit den jungen Damen in Unterhaltungen ein, die von seiner Seite nicht immer harmlos geführt waren, und trank mehr, als er vertragen konnte. Einmal spielte er im Hause eines Bankdirektors zum Tanze auf. Nachdem er schon vor Mitternacht durch anzüglich-galante Bemerkungen die vorbeitanzenden jungen Mädchen in Verlegenheit gebracht und bei ihren Herrn Anstoß erregt hatte, fiel es ihm ein, einen wüsten Cancan zu spielen und mit seinem gewaltigen Baß ein zweideutiges Couplet dazu zu singen. Der Bankdirektor verwies es ihm heftig. Nachtigall, wie von seliger Heiterkeit erfüllt, erhob sich, umarmte den Direktor, dieser, empört, fauchte, obwohl selbst Jude, dem Pianisten ein landesübliches Schimpfwort ins Gesicht, das Nachtigall unverzüglich mit einer gewaltigen Ohrfeige

quittierte – womit seine Laufbahn in den besseren Häusern der Stadt endgültig abgeschlossen erschien. (37)[73]

Nachtigall sacrifices his security and success as a result of his inability or unwillingness to control his impulses. Fridolin's situation is different, however. While Nachtigall's poor choices represent a life-long pattern, Fridolin's impulses have arisen in response to an acute crisis (mid-life crisis). His ability or inability to resist those crisis-generated impulses will determine the final outcome for Fridolin.

In response to Fridolin's inquiries into his current plans, Nachtigall eventually informs Fridolin that he must go that night to play piano at a gathering so secret, that a password is needed to gain admittance. The individuals who have organized the highly clandestine event, a masked ball, send for him in a coach that brings him, blindfolded, to a different location each time. Despite the fact that he is forced to wear a blindfold throughout the event, Nachtigall admits that he has caught quick glimpses of what goes on there:

"[…] Wirklich, ich weiß nicht. Ich spiele, ich spiele – mit verbundene Augen."

"Nachtigall, Nachtigall, was singst du da für ein Lied!"

[73] "[…] on such occasions he would play only what suited him and as long as he chose. His conversations with the young girls present were not always harmless, and he drank more than he could carry. Once, playing for a dance in the house of a wealthy banker he embarrassed several couples with flattering but improper remarks, and ended up by playing a wild cancan and singing a risqué song with his powerful, bass voice. The host gave him a severe calling down, but Nachtigall, blissfully hilarious, got up an embarrassed him. The latter was furious and, although himself a Jew, hurled a common insult at him. Nachtigall at once retaliated with a powerful box on his ears, and this definitely concluded his career in the fashionable houses of the city" (45).

> Nachtigall seufzte leise. "Aber nicht ganz verbunden. Nicht so, daß ich gar nichts sehe. Ich seh' nämlich im Spiegel durch das schwarze Seidentuch über meine Augen..." Und wieder schwieg er. "Mit einem Wort," sagte Fridolin ungeduldig und verächtlich, fühlte sich aber sonderbar erregt... "nackte Frauenzimmer." (40-41)[74]

The intimations that Nachtigall makes about of these performances capture Fridolin's lurid imagination, and he begs Nachtigall to assist him in sneaking into the ball to witness this for himself. Nachtigall is at first reluctant and cautions Fridolin that the undertaking is dangerous. In addition, he would need a costume to attend which, at that late hour, would be difficult to procure. Despite Nachtigall's reticent, Fridolin presses him, claiming that he is not afraid and that he knows of a costumer in the vicinity from whom he could easily obtain a costume.

At the costumer, Gibiser's shop, Fridolin has one last encounter before the masquerade, which will mark the end of his journey through the limbo of unresolved subjectivity. Once again, many of the same themes that arose in each of Fridolin's previous encounters emerge, most specifically, gradually increasing reluctance to act on his crisis-driven impulses. As he approaches the costumer's shop, he experiences misgivings and a hope that circumstances themselves will put an end to the "adventures"

[74] "'I don't know for what occasion. I simply play – with bandaged eyes.'
'Nachtigall, what do you mean?'
Nachtigall sighed a little and continued: 'Unfortunately my eyes are not completely bandaged, so that I can occasionally see something. I can see through the black silk handkerchief over my eyes in the mirror opposite…' And he stopped.
'In other words,' said Fridolin impatiently and contemptuously, but feeling strangely excited, 'naked females'" (50-51).

he is pursuing. It is as though his actions were being driven by a force beyond his own volition, which is true in the sense that his volition is divided and conflicted with itself. It no longer represents a single, unified agency:

> Nach wenigen Minuten, im Laufschritt, war er zu dem Eckhaus gelangt, das er suchte, läutete, erkundigte sich beim Hausmeister, ob der Maskenverleiher Gibiser hier im Hause wohnte, und hoffte im stillen, daß es nicht der Fall wäre. (42)[75]

This is a somewhat stronger expression of reluctance than we have previously seen, and it gives the sense that, while Fridolin is a puppet to his impulses and to the fluctuations in the semiotic current, he truly wishes for resolution and an end to this twilight state. That twilight state and loss of self is perhaps best expressed when, as he is dressed the rented monk's garb required to gain admittance into the masquerade, Fridolin glances into the costumer's mirror and experiences a sense of alienation from the identity that he is about to present in social intercourse:

> Fridolin erblickte in einem großen Wandspiegel rechts einen hageren Pilger, der niemand anderer war als er selbst, [...]. (46)[76]

Fridolin's costumed identity as a pilgrim – a seeker on a sacred quest – ironically underscores the true nature of his journey in search of self. It is a quest for an expression the sublime or, in other words, for an expression of subjectivity that transcends the limitations imposed by symbolized meaning. The costumer's, however, proves to be yet

[75] "He ran down the street and reached the corner house he was looking for a few minutes later. He rang the bell, inquired from the caretaker whether the costumer Gibiser lived in the house, and hoped in the bottom of his heart that he would receive a negative answer" (53).
[76] "He noticed with surprise, in a large wall mirror to the right, a haggard pilgrim who seemed to be himself. At the same time he knew very well that it could be no other" (59).

again a spurious goal for that quest. There, Fridolin is confronted with an apparently sordid scene in which two older gentlemen dressed as vehmic judges are engaged in some illicit, sexual game with a young girl. As Gibiser startles the trio, the girl appears to escape the men, throwing herself upon Fridolin. It is unclear from this precipitous gesture whether she is seeking his protection or his attentions:

> Von zwei Stühlen rechts und links erhoben sich je ein Femrichter in rotem Talar, während ein zierliches helles Wesen im selben Augenblick verschwand. Gibiser stürzte mit langen Schritten hin, griff über den Tisch und hielt eine weiße Perücke in der Hand, während zugleich unter dem Tisch sich hervorschlängelnd ein anmutiges, ganz junges Mädchen, fast noch ein Kind, im Pierrettenkostüm mit weißen Seidenstrümpfen durch den Gang bis zu Fridolin gelaufen kam, der sie notgedrungen in seinen Armen auffing. (44)[77]

Gibiser explains, with an apology to Fridolin, that the girl is both insane and depraved, however despite this explanation, Fridolin remains confused by the young girl's motives. Her ambiguous gesture feeds into the fluctuation of his identity between caretaker (physician, husband, and father) and potential suitor. In either role – that of protector or of partner – Fridolin's first impulse is either to remain with the girl, or to take her with him:

[77] "Two men dressed in the red robes of vehmic judges, sprang up from two chairs beside the table and a graceful little girl disappeared at the same moment. Gibiser rushed forward with long strides, reached across the table and grabbed a white wig in his hand. Simultaneously a young and charming girl, still almost a child, wearing a Pierrette costume, wriggled out from under the table and ran along the passage to Fridolin who caught her in his arms" (55-56).

Am liebsten wäre er dageblieben oder hätte die Kleine gleich mitgenommen, wohin immer – und was immer daraus gefolgt wäre. Sie sah lockend und kindlich zu ihm auf, wie gebannt. (57)[78]

Seizing the physician's privilege of dispassionate intimacy (while at the same time abusing that prerogative), Fridolin attempts to use his position as medical practitioner both to safeguard the girl against abuse, and concurrently to secure an opportunity to return and see her again:

Doch Fridolin rührte sich nicht vom Fleck. "Sie schwören mir, daß Sie dem armen Kind nichts Böses tun werden."

"Was kümmert Sie das, Herr?"

"Ich hörte, wie Sie die Kleine vorher als wahnsinnig bezeichneten, – und jetzt nannten Sie sie ein verworfenes Geschöpf. Ein auffallender Widerspruch, Sie wurden es nicht leugnen."

"Nun, mein Herr," entgegnete Gibiser mit einem Ton wie auf dem Theater, "ist der Wahnsinnige nicht verworfen vor Gott?"

Fridolin schüttelte sich angewidert.

"Wie immer," bemerkte er dann, "es wird sich Rat scaffen lassen. Ich bin Arzt. Wir reden morgen weiter über die Sache." (46)[79]

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[78] "He would have liked to stay, or, better still, to take the girl with him, no matter where – and whatever the consequences. She looked up at him with alluring and child-like eyes, as if spellbound" (57).

[79] "Fridolin, however, refused to move. 'Swear that you won't hurt that poor child,' he said.
'What business is it of yours?'
'I heard you, a minute ago, say that the girl was insane – and just now you called her a depraved creature. That sounds pretty contradictory.'
'Well,' replied Gibiser theatrically, 'aren't insanity and depravity the same in the eyes of God?'
Fridolin shuddered with disgust.

The film expresses this misuse of the physician's prerogative in an especially concise manner. In moments when Bill (i.e., Fridolin) is confronted with opposition, such as when he wishes to gain admittance to the costumer, he habitually pulls out his wallet and "flashes" his medical identification the way a law enforcement officer would flash his badge. This misappropriation of an authority that is not his (i.e., that of a police officer) by utilizing a gesture inappropriate to his own status serves to demonstrate how inappropriate such claims to privilege are to the role of physician. Those gestures draw the viewer's awareness to the coexistence of competing realities in Bill/Fridolin's limbo-state.

Costume in hand, Fridolin returns to Nachtigall, resolved to follow through with his intention of attending the secret masquerade. After questioning Fridolin's resolve to attend on last time, Nachtigall relents and tells Fridolin the secret password he will need to get into the ball:

> "Du hast dir also richtig ein Kostüm verschafft?"
>
> "Wie du siehst. Und die Parole?"
>
> "Du bestehst also darauf?"
>
> "Unbedingt."
>
> "Also – Parole ist Dänemark." (47)[80]

'Whatever it is,' he remarked, 'there are ways and means of attending to it. I am a doctor. We'll have another talk about this tomorrow'" (59).

[80] " 'Then you did manage to get a costume?'
You can see for yourself. What's the password?'
'You insist in knowing it?'
'Absolutely.'
'Well then – it's Denmark'" (60).

The significance of the password within the narrative is evident. 'Dänemark' recalls the holiday that Fridolin and Albertine had taken the previous summer during which, as the quarrel that evening revealed, both had vaguely entertained the possibility of committing adultery. In *Eyes Wide Shut*¸ this connection with potential infidelity is laid out with even greater clarity by the use of the password, *Fidelio.* The password, both in the novella and in the film, establishes the intention that prompts Fridolin to attend the clandestine masquerade – to commit infidelity. At the same time, in both instances the passwords themselves suggest that he will not actually act on these impulses. The password in the film is "fidelity" after all, not "infidelity," and "Denmark" refers to events in which both partners considered adultery, but only in the most abstract sense. Neither took any action to realize that impulse. These "opportunities" existed largely in Albertine and Fridolin's imaginations with little real possibility of fulfillment. In Fridolin's case in particular, his "infatuation" was with a girl whom he had trapped unwillingly on the ledge of a bathing hut – a reiteration of a theme of vulnerability and rape discussed above.

The masquerade's location is clandestine, changing on a rotating basis, and even Nachtigall has no idea where it is to take place. The masquerade organizers send for him in a coach that, as Fridolin observes, closely resembles a mourning coach:

> Draußen stand ein geschlossener Wagen, unbeweglich auf dem
> Bock saß ein Kutscher, ganz in Schwarz, mit hohem Zylinder; –
> wie eine Trauerkutsche, dachte Fridolin. (42)[81]

[81] "A closed carriage was standing outside. A coachman dressed entirely in black with a tall hat on the box, motionless. It looks like [a] mourning coach, Fridolin thought" (53).

A mourning coach is appropriate, since it will be at this secret masquerade that Fridolin's deferred identity will finally be foreclosed upon. Although Fridolin himself does not yet sit in that coach, the death of an aspect of his identity is immanent. In an echo of Fridolin's earlier visit to the Court Counselor, no art or artifice will be of use, and the physician will arrive to find his patient already dead.

Still trapped in his limbo-state as the cab makes its way to the remote, suburban location of the masquerade, Fridolin finds that he is unable to choose among the various manifestations of identity that he perceives to be open to him. As yet unaware that the foreclosure of deferred identity is inevitable and that none of the evening's encounters have held any true potential, Fridolin is nonetheless becoming cognoscente of the fact that his journey may indeed end badly. Increasingly confused regarding the motivation for his actions, plans, and unseen even where he now finds himself, Fridolin's crisis, which had begun with vague feelings of unease, has become increasingly uncomfortable:

> Es könnte auch übel ausgehen, dachte Fridolin. Dabei spürte er immer noch den Geruch von Rosen und Puder, der von Pierrettens Brüsten zu ihm aufgestiegen war. An welch einen seltsamen Roman bin ich da vorübergestreift? fragte er sich. Ich hätte nicht fortgehen sollen, vielleicht nicht dürfen. Wo bin ich nun eigentlich? (47-48)[82]

[82] "This business may end badly, thought Fridolin. At the same time he remembered the fragrance of the roses and powder that had arisen from Pierrette's breast. What strange story is behind all that? He wondered. I shouldn't have left – perhaps it was even a great mistake – I wonder where I am now" (61).

Fridolin's ambivalence and confusion are understandable when one considers that the resolution of his crisis will result in some form of loss. As long as there is no integration of competing currents of subjectivity, Fridolin will find it difficult to voluntarily put an end to his nocturnal journey, and his apprehension is founded on a fear of loosing some aspect of subjectivity; a loss which Fridolin characterizes as death, even as he laughs at his own hyperbole:

> Der Wagen stand still. Wie wär's, dachte Fridolin, wenn ich gar nicht erst aussteige – sondern lieber gleich zurückkehrte? Aber wohin? Zu der kleinen Pierrette? Oder zu dem Dirnchen in der Buchfeldgasse? Oder zu Marianne, der Tochter des Verstorbenen? Oder nach Hause? Und mit einem leichten Schauer empfand er, daß er nirgendshin sich weniger sehnte als gerade dorthin. Oder war es, weil dieser Weg ihn der weiteste dünkte? Nein, ich kann nicht zurück, dachte er bei sich. Weiter meinen Weg, und wär's mein Tod. Er lachte selbst zu dem großen Wort, aber sehr heiter war ihm dabei nicht zumut. (48-49)[83]

The notion that the evening might end with a "death" may indeed seem overly dramatic, death need not necessarily be taken in a literal sense. The foreclosure of deferred identity would mean the "death" of subjectivity accommodated therein. At the same time, realizing deferred identity would likely lead to the "death" of primary identity, and

[83] "His cab stopped. What if I don't get out at all, Fridolin thought, and go back at once? But go where? To little Pierrette? To the girl in Buchfeld Strasse? Or to Marianne, the daughter of the deceased? Or perhaps home? He shuddered slightly and decided he'd rather go anywhere than home. Was it because it was farthest to go? No, I can't turn back, he thought. I must go through with this, even if it means death. And he laughed at himself, using such a big word but without feeling very cheerful about it" (62-63).

should Fridolin attempt to realize deferred identity and fail, he could experience a "death" in the loss of *both* deferred and primary identity. Even the integration of competing identity would mean the restructuring of the semiotic current and of subjectivity. No matter what resolution he ultimately finds, Fridolin's crisis will end with a change in the way in which subjectivity is structured, and will therefore suffer some manner of loss.

As he arrives at the masquerade in mask and costumed as a monk, Fridolin is able to enter more or less unobtrusively. The other attendees, likewise masked and clad in the garb of monks and nuns, mingle with one another amidst the sounds of Italian church music played above their heads on a harmonium:

> Masken, durchaus in geistlicher Tracht, schritten auf und ab, sechzehn bis zwanzig Personen, Mönche und Nonnen. Die Harmoniumklänge, sanft anschwellend, eine italienische Kirchenmelodie, schienen aus der Höhe herabzutönen. (49-50)[84]

The masquerade marks the climax of Fridolin's traumatic crisis, and therefore there is increased reference to semiotic overflow as it is manifested in all of the organizational domains, (i.e., somatic manifestations in the Epistemic, death as the encroachment of Other upon Self in the Ethical, as well as the profound disruption of symbolized identity and of social mirroring). The atmosphere of the masquerade reiterates the plague motif intimated earlier in the novella with references to the Föhn as a bringer of contagion and death. The ball scene itself, which is somewhat reminiscent Boccaccio's *Decameron,* the ball also recalls a *Danse Macabre*, or "Dance of Death" associated with the plague in art,

[84] "Sixteen to twenty people masked and dressed as monks and nuns were walking up and down. The gently swelling strains of Italian church music came from above" (64).

literature and music. Its attendees take part knowing that they are threatened with "death" (whether literally, or figuratively in the sense of social death) should they be unmasked and their true identity made known. Only a few weeks prior, a young, aristocratic girl who was engaged with an Italian prince was forcibly unmasked by a male participant. That man was, himself, unmasked and driven from the masquerade:

> "Es war eine Nacht, da fiel es einem ein, einer von uns im Tanz den Schleier von der Stirn zu reißen. Man riß ihm die Larve vom Gesicht und peitschte ihn hinaus." (54)[85]

Not only was the cavalier violently expelled, but the young woman herself subsequently committed suicide, presumably because her reputation and prospects were ruined by the scandal. The precariousness of the clandestine masquerade is made evident by this event. The masquerade's attendees are able to participate, living out a second, otherwise deferred identity that could potentially destroy primary identity. They are able to do so, however, only by preserving their own anonymity, and that of the other participants. Should that anonymity be violated, the mingling of both sides of their double lives constitutes a kind of infection that can destroy both identities (i.e., the loss both of anonymity and of the careful separation of identities brings contagion and death).

Kubrick's representation of this plague motif is visually direct, and many of the costumes worn by the masquerade's participants consist of the long robes and beaked masks once worn by physicians to protect themselves from the plague. Ironically, Bill, although himself actually a physician, does not wear this physician's garb. In the social

[85] "'One night during the dance here one of the men took it into his head to tear the veil from one of us. They ripped the mask from his face and drove him out with whips'" (71).

structure of the clandestine masquerade, Bill (Fridolin) does not possess a privileged role. Instead, he is an infiltrator and potential carrier of "contagion" that could destroy the compact under which the secret society is able to conduct its activities were he to reveal the identities of the other participants. The hermetic closure of the event that allows its participants to lead this double life is, in essence, breeched by Fridolin's uninvited attendance.

Fridolin is appropriately dressed and masked, and therefore his arrival does not arouse immediate suspicion. As was the case at the masquerade he attended with Albertine the night before, however, his familiarity with the customs and behaviors appropriate to the event are restricted to the most superficial level. In the details of how he conducts himself and in the finer points of interaction, he is gradually recognized as an interloper:

> In einem Winkel des Saales stand eine kleine Gruppe, drei Nonnen und zwei Mönche; von dort aus hatte man sich flüchtig zu ihm hin und gleich wieder, wie mit Absicht, abgewandt. Fridolin merkte, daß er als einziger das Haupt bedeckt hatte, nahm den Pilgerhut ab und wandelte so harmlos als möglich auf und nieder; ein Mönch streifte seinen Arm und nickte einen Gruß; doch hinter der Maske bohrte sich ein Blick, eine Sekunde lang, tief in Fridolins Augen. (49-50)[86]

[86] "A small group, composed of three nuns and two monks, stood in the corner of the room. They watched him for a second, but turned away again at once, almost deliberately. Fridolin, noticing that he was the only one who wore a hat, took his off and walked up and down as nonchalantly as possible. A monk brushed

At first, the other attendees at the ball appear suspicious but not yet prepared to decry Fridolin as an intruder. Rather, they watch him carefully, while avoiding direct contact with him. A single, masked woman approaches him discretely and warns him that he must flee while there is still time or he will soon be discovered:

> Wenden Sie sich nicht nach mir um. Noch ist es Zeit, daß Sie sich entfernen. Sie gehören nicht hierher. Wenn man es entdeckt, erginge es Ihnen schlimm. (50)[87]

Fridolin is unable to bring himself to leave, bewitched, as it were, by this beautiful, masked woman. Indeed it is precisely this figure of the "unknown woman" that is the object of Fridolin's desire – more so than Marianne, Mizzi, or the young girl at the costumer's shop, since his ultimate pursuit is merely that which has been deferred in the most abstract sense. His crisis is one of foreclosed identity, and therefore it is no specific woman that he desires, but merely the possibility of being with another woman. Fridolin's life choices have manifested his identity within the confines of one career, one partner, and so forth. The foreclosure of deferred identity does not in and of itself have any particular form, but instead represents the sum of what was lost. Consequently, as Fridolin's crisis reaches its climax and as foreclosure looms inevitable, the figures that arouse his desire more closely embody the essence of that crisis by being both the *unknown* and the *unknowable*, forever unattainable:

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against him and nodded a greeting, but from behind the mask, Fridolin encountered a searching and penetrating glance" (64).

[87] "'Don't turn around. There's still a chance for you to get away. You don't belong here. If it's discovered it will go hard with you'" (65).

> […] Frauen standen unbeweglich da, all mit dunkelen Schleiern um Haupt, Stirn und Nacken, schwarze Spitzenlarven über dem Antlitz, aber sonst völlig nackt. Fridolins Augen irrten durstig von üppigen zu schlanken, von zarten und prangend erblühten Gestalten; – und daß jede dieser Unverhüllten doch ein Geheimnis blieb und aus den schwarzen Masken als unlöslichste Rätsel große Augen zu ihm herüberstrahlten, das wandelte ihm die unsägliche Qual des Verlangens. (51)[88]

The women at the masquerade confront Fridolin with a tangible metaphor for what he seeks, however like all of his previous encounters, he is not prepared to act on his impulses and desires. If there ever had been any realistic expectation that he might do so, that expectation is now annulled. Fridolin is literally not equipped to go any farther with his charade as the men change out of their monk's cassocks and into the bright costumes of cavaliers:

> […] – und plötzlich, als wären sie gejagt, stürzten sie alle, nicht mehr in ihren Mönchskutten, sondern in festlichen weißen, gelben, blauen, roten Kavalierstrachten aus dem dämmerigen Saal zu den Frauen hin, wo ein tolles, beinah böses Lachen sie empfing. Fridolin war der einzige, der als Mönch zurückgeblieben war, und

[88] "They wore dark veils over their heads, faces and necks and black masks over their eyes, but otherwise they were completely naked. Fridolin's eyes wandered eagerly from voluptuous to slender bodies, from delicate figures to those luxuriously developed. He realized that each of these women would forever be a mystery, and that the enigma of their large eyes peering at him from beneath the black masks would remain unsolved. The delight of beholding was changed to an almost unbearable agony of desire" (66-67).

schlich sich, einigermaßen ängstlich, in die entfernteste Ecke [...]. (51-52)[89]

As the only chaste pilgrim amidst cavaliers reveling in their debauchery, Fridolin is neatly exposed as what he truly is – an outsider playing a role and ultimately, playing it badly. The nocturnal journey is revealed as a futile, crisis-driven attempt to reclaim what has already been lost. Despite his obvious inability to participate any farther, however Fridolin is as yet unwilling or unable to admit his failure and exclusion:

> Was ihn trotzdem in seine Ecke gebannt hielt, wo er sich nun ungesehen und unbeachtet fühlen durfte – die Scheu vor einem ruhmlosen und etwas lächerlichen Rückzug, das ungestillte, quälende Verlangen nach dem wundersamen Frauenleib, dessen Duft noch um ihn strich; oder die Erwägung, daß alles, was bisher geschehen, vielleicht eine Prüfung seines Muts bedeutet hätte und daß ihm die herrliche Frau als Preis zufallen würde [...]. (55)[90]

Unable to concede defeat and permit the foreclosure of deferred identity, Fridolin continues to be driven to find a "harmonious finale" that would allow him to old both his primary identity and deferred identity such that they were separate but equal. Fridolin perceives that this manner of resolution would resolve his crisis such that no loss need

[89] "Suddenly all of them, as though pursued, rushed from the darkened room to the women, who received them with wild and wicked laughter. The men were no longer in cassocks, but dressed as cavaliers, in white, yellow, blue and red. Fridolin was the only one in monk's dress. Somewhat nervously he slunk into the farthest corner […]" (67).

[90] "He didn't know, however, why it was that he remained spellbound in his corner where he now felt sure that he was not observed. It might be his aversion to an inglorious and perhaps ridiculous retreat, or the excruciating ungratified desire for the beautiful woman whose fragrance was still in his nostrils. Or he may have stayed because he vaguely hoped that all that had happened so far was intended as a test of his courage and that this magnificent woman would be his reward" (72).

occur, while also putting an end to the uncomfortable tantalization and the emptiness of his limbo state of unrealized identity. Ultimately what he seeks is validation by the discursive community at the clandestine masquerade (the Communicative domain) that his "adventures" that night might represent a valid expression of his own subjective identity. He wishes to know, in other words, that those "adventures" had a real potential for fulfillment, and that they were not a desperate but futile attempt to deny that foreclosure had already occurred:

> Und so kam ihm der Einfall, unter sie hinzutretten, sich selbst als Eindringling zu benennen und sich ihren in ritterlicher Weise zur Verfügung zu stellen. Nur in solcher Art, wie mit einem edeln Akkord, durfte diese Nacht abschließen, wenn sie mehr bedeuten sollte als ein schattenhaft wüstes Nacheinander von düsteren, trübseligen, skurrilen und lüsternen Abenteuern, deren doch keines zu Ende gelebt war. Und aufatmend machte er sich bereit. (55-56)[91]

This impulse is futile, since it is not possible to realize mutually opposed identity without at the same time dividing subjectivity. The end towards which his crisis drives him is actually the reintegration of subjectivity through the *sublimation* of diverted semiotic current and the restructuring of the organizational domains.

[91] "The thought occurred to him to acknowledge himself as an intruder and to place himself at their disposal in chivalrous fashion. This night could only conclude in such a manner, – with a harmonious finale, as it were – if it were to mean more than a wild, shadow-like succession of gloomy and lascivious adventures, all without an end. So, taking a deep breath, he prepared to carry out his plan" (72-73).

The desire to seek a harmonious conclusion to his crisis in the maintenance of bifurcated subjectivity and the validation of both currents of subjectivity in the Communicative domain constitutes Fridolin's potentially "fatal" flaw. Unlike Albertine who, as we will see is able to *sublimate* diverted subjectivity without literally acting it out and embodying it, Fridolin is trapped by his inability to conceive of a solution to his crisis besides literally living out both identities concurrently, regardless their innate incompatibility. If he attempts to have both, however, everything will be lost sooner or later – both his primary identity and the object of his desire (what he has deferred). Fridolin cannot hold onto the "unknown woman," nor take her with him as he returns to his everyday life (in a sense, his "waking" life). Her sexual availability in this dual identity is limited to these clandestine functions, and even there, she is unavailable to Fridolin, who is an infiltrator. Outside of the masquerade, her secret, second identity must remain a secret, or she (and any potential partner) risks forfeiting their everyday life and identity. As his unknown benefactress declares:

> "Du bist wahnsinnig. Ich kann nicht mit dir von hier fortgehen, so wenig – wie mit irgendeinem anderen. Und wer versuchen wollte, mir zu folgen, hätte sein und mein Leben verwirkt." (54)[92]

The situation in which Fridolin finds himself eventually puts an end to his charade. Even before he can attempt to seek a "harmonious finale" by revealing himself, he is discovered and forced to drop the pretense that he has any legitimate claim to be at the masquerade. At the same time, he must also relinquish his claim to deferred identity,

[92] "'You are mad. I can no more go with you than with anyone else. And whoever would attempt to follow me, would forfeit his life and mine'" (70) [translation mine].

which he has intermittently worn like a mask throughout the novella up until this point. Unlike the discrete withdrawal of the prostitutes at the *Redout,* the rejection of Fridolin's deferred identity at this second masquerade fundamentally invalidates the notion that this identity is potentially realizable. Even in his last bid to stave off foreclosure by giving satisfaction in a duel (another manifestation of deferred identity) fails:

> "Die Maske herunter!" riefen einige zugleich. Wie zum Schutz hielt Fridolin die Arme vor sich hingestreckt. Tausendmal schlimmer wäre es ihm erschienen. Der einzige mit unverlarvtem Gesicht unter lauter Masken dazustehen, als plötzlich unter Angekleideten nackt. Und mit fester Stimme sagte er: "Wenn einer von den Herren sich durch mein Erscheinen in seiner Ehre gekränkt fühlen sollte, so erkläre ich mich bereit, ihm in üblicher Weise Genugtuung zu geben. Doch meine Maske werde ich nur in dem Falle ablegen, daß Sie alle das gleiche tun, meine Herren." (56-57)[93]

From this point on we can say that foreclosure has occurred whether or not Fridolin is prepared to accept it. The scene reiterates his discovery as an intruder at the first masked ball. Unlike that first masquerade, at which he was able to regroup with Albertine and continue the pretense within the privacy of their own, discursive community, however, Fridolin is ordered to remove his mask and quit the falsified role he

[93] "'Take off your mask!' several of them demanded. Fridolin held out his arm to protect himself. It seemed a thousand times worse to be the only one unmasked amongst so many that were, than to stand suddenly naked amongst people who were dressed. He replied firmly: 'If my appearance here has offended any of the gentlemen present, I am ready to give satisfaction in the usual manner, but I shall take off my mask only if you will do the same" (74).

has been playing. Rejection in the Communicative domain is unequivocal, and there is no way for him to "save" himself by deferring identity further. His one chance to remain at the masquerade rests on his ability to produce the house password, however just as he had arrived with the costume that gained him admittance, but not the costume that allowed his active participation, Fridolin has only been given the password for admittance (Denmark), not the house password that would allow him to abide there. His claim that he forgot the password (i.e., that he once had a valid claim to participate) is of no use to him, and as the cavalier who demands the password notes:

> "[…] ers gilt hier gleich, ob Sie die Parole vergessen oder ob Sie sie nie gekannt haben." (56)[94]

It is not enough, in other words, that identity was once valid and merely deferred. The passage of time and the foreclosure of identity annul that previous validity and with foreclosure, deferred identity becomes no different than identity to which he had never had a claim, with its only value being historical. Fridolin can no longer claim foreclosed identity as his own in the present field of symbolized meaning merely on the basis that he once might have done so.

Having been rejected by the discursive community into which he sought admittance, Fridolin must now somehow "salvage" primary identity against devaluation or ruin through his attempted indiscretion. As I noted, exposure within the closed circle of libertines who attended this clandestine function can mean the loss of reputation and of key relationships, and can result in social ruin or even death. Ironically, it works in

[94] "[…] here it doesn't matter whether you have forgotten it or whether you never knew it" (73).

Fridolin's favor that he does not belong to the upper-class social milieu of which the masquerade's regular attendees are a part, since exposure at the masquerade will not automatically lead to exposure within his everyday life. In addition, he has not actually acted on any of his libidinal impulses nor participated in the debaucheries being committed at the masquerade. As a result, unlike those other participants, Fridolin is not yet leading a true double life in order that he may live out conflicted subjectivity as separate but competing identities. Fridolin can still abandon his efforts to realize deferred identity and return to his life, eventually sublimating those impulses by holding diverted subjectivity in a narrative domain (dream, fantasy, creative pursuits, etc.), while at the same time, allowing that subjectivity to enhance primary identity (as Albertine will do with her dream).

Fridolin's escape from these sordid and "senseless childish adventures," as he himself will later characterize them, is safeguarded by the voluntary sacrifice of the masked, "unknown woman" who warned him earlier that he should leave. She now steps forward and demands that he be permitted to go, unmolested:

> "Laßt ihn," sagte die Nonne, "ich bin bereit, ihn auszulösen."
>
> (57)[95]

Whatever basis in reality the events at the clandestine masquerade might have, from this point on that realistic basis is eclipsed by the metaphoric significance of those events. The woman's "sacrifice," whatever that might actually be, acquires its significance in Fridolin's situation in that it represents the sacrifice of the object of desire – a desire that

[95] "'Leave him alone,' said the nun. 'I am ready to redeem him'" (75).

articulates deferred identity and that therefore cannot be fulfilled – in order to save primary identity. Only by giving up his claims to potential identities and potential partners (whether they possess real or imagined potential), and by allowing the demise of what he desires can Fridolin hold on to all he has of value in the life he has already chosen.

The "sacrifice" suggested by the masked woman is found acceptable, and Fridolin is released "unharmed," but with a warning to drop all further pursuit of the matter:

> "Sie sind frei," sagte der Kavalier zu Fridolin, "verlassen Sie ungesäumt dieses Haus und hüten Sie sich, weiter nach den Geheimnissen zu forschen, in deren Vorhof Sie sich eingeschlichen haben. Sollten Sie irgend jemanden auf unsere Spur zu leiten versuchen, ob es nun glückte oder nicht; – Sie wären verloren." (57)[96]

The warning is clear: Fridolin should be satisfied that he has narrowly escaped, having pursued deferred identity and desire as far as possible without actually jeopardizing primary identity, career, and the integrity of his family, etc. Confronted with foreclosure, and perceiving his chance to realize his fantasy about to be lost forever, however, Fridolin makes one last futile attempt to salvage deferred identity by claiming that his life will have lost all meaning without the "unknown woman," and by offering to openly claim deferred identity:

[96] "'You are free,' said the cavalier to Fridolin. 'Leave this house at once and be careful not to inquire further into what you have seen here. If you attempt to put anyone on our trail, whether you succeed or not – you are doomed'" (75).

> "Das Leben hat keinen Wert mehr für mich, wenn ich ohne dich von hier fortgehen soll. Woher du kommst, wer du bist, ich frage nicht danach. Was kann es Ihnen, meine unbekannten Herren, bedeuten, ob Sie diese Faschingskömodie, und sei es auch auf einem ernsthaften Schluß angelegt, zu Ende spielen oder nicht. Wer immer Sie sein mögen, meine Herren, Sie führen in jedem Fall noch eine andere Existenz als diese. Ich aber spiele keinerlei Komödie, auch nicht hier, und wenn ich es bisher notgedrungen getan habe, so gebe ich es jetzt auf. Ich fühle, daß ich in ein Schicksal geraten bin, das mit dieser Mummerei nichts mehr zu tun hat, ich will Ihnen meinen Name nennen, ich will meine Larve abtun und nehme alle Folgen auf mich." (58)[97]

We cannot understand this attachment to this woman in a literal sense, since not only has he never seen her face, he is also willing to forego seeing her ever again in the future, vowing that he will not seek her true identity. (Fridolin's declaration bears a striking resemblance to Marianne's "love declaration" in the preceding chapter of the novella.) Rather, the loss of deferred identity signals the collapse of a Narrative domain that has arisen to compete as a second Idiolect. With that collapse, comes the loss of symbolized meaning as it was articulated in that domain, as well as the loss of its holding function for

[97] "'Life means nothing to me if I must leave here without you. I shall not ask who you are or where you come from. What difference can it make to you, gentlemen, whether or not you keep up this carnival comedy, though it may aim at a serious conclusion. Whatsoever you may be, you surely lead other lives. I won't play a part, here or elsewhere, and if I have been forced up to now, I shall give it up. I feel that fate has overtaken me which has nothing to do with this foolery. I will tell you my name, take off my mask and be responsible for the consequences'" (76).

diverted subjectivity. In this sense, life has indeed lost its meaning – as it was articulated in the symbolized terms of that Narrative domain.

Fridolin seeks the empathy of those participants in this "*Faschingskomödie*" who, as he rightly notes, themselves lead a double life in which neither half is compatible. At the same time, he recognizes the gravity of his own crisis, which is existential, and which concerns the survival of the self. What Fridolin seeks, the sublime, cannot be accommodated in the playacting of such a lurid gathering. Fridolin is not seeking a random and meaningless sexual encounter, but the open possibility of shaping his life anew with a different partner, different career choice, etc. Any attempt to pursue deferred identity as a separate expression of subjectivity at this point must fail, destroying primary identity in the bargain. Once again the "unknown woman" seeks to warn Fridolin of the folly of his desires. He cannot hold onto her, and any attempt to do so can only end with his own ruin:

> "Hüte dich!" rief die Nonne aus, "du würdest dich verderben, ohne mich zu retten! Geh!" (58)[98]

The narrative makes clear that a choice between primary and deferred identity is not open to him but rather, he must choose to *recognize* that deferred identity is lost to him. Circumstances have foreclosed identity without Fridolin's active participation and his lack of volition in the matter is underscored by the manner in which he is expelled from the masquerade. Subsequent events unfold not only without Fridolin's volition or active participation, but to a large extent without any discernable agency at all. Propelled

[98] "'Don't do it,' exclaimed the nun, 'you would only ruin yourself without saving me. Go!'" (77).

forward by arms, not people, the door seems to slam itself shut and the light to extinguish itself in his wake:

> Die dunkele Tracht fiel wie durch ein Zauber von ihr ab, [...] – doch ehe noch Fridolin das Bild ihres Antlitzes zu erhaschen vermochte, war er von unwiderstehlichen Armen erfaßt, fortgerissen und zur Türe gedrängt worden; im Augenblick darauf befand er sich im Vorraum, die Türe hinter ihm fiel zu [...]. (58-59)[99]
>
> […] das Haustor öffnete sich. Wie von einer unsichtbaren Gewalt fortgetrieben eilte er weiter, er stand auf der Straße, das Licht hinter ihm erlosch, […] (59)[100]

Stressing the finality of the foreclosure and the "death" of deferred identity, Fridolin is prevented from returning home in the taxi he has hired, and instead, he is commanded into the mourning coach that had earlier brought Nachtigall. The entire adventure, which has become increasingly dreamlike as it progressed, appears to loose touch with reality nearly altogether in the hyperbolic description of his coach ride:

> Der Diener antwortete mit einer Handbeweging so wenig bedientenhafter Art, daß sie jeden Widerspruch ausschloß. Der Zylinder des Kutschers ragte lächerlich lang in die Nacht auf. Der Wind blies heftig, über den Himmel hin flogen violette Wolken.

[99] "The dark costume dropped from her, as if by magic […] – but before Fridolin could even glance at her face, he was seized by irresistible arms, and pushed t the door. A moment later he found himself in the anteroom, the door closed behind him" (77).
[100] "The main door opened automatically, and as if driven by some invisible force, he hurried out. As he stood on the street the light behind disappeared" (77).

> Fridolin konnte sich nach seinen bisherigen Erlebnissen nicht darüber täuschen, daß ihm nichts übrigblieb, als in den Wagen zu steigen, der sich auch mit ihm unverzüglich in Bewegung setzte. (59)[101]

As he is borne home, Fridolin grieves the loss of deferred identity, once again noting that life will have lost all meaning without the "unknown woman":

> Sein Dasein, so schien ihm, hatte nicht den geringsten Sinn mehr, wenn es ihm nicht gelang, die unbegreifliche Frau wiederzufinden, die in dieser Stunde den Preis für seine Rettung bezahlte. (59)[102]

Despite this moment of grief and despair and despite the lingering desire to return to this woman, we also see the first return of Fridolin's sensible and responsible nature on that coach ride. There, he recognizes, for the first time, the true nature of the event he is leaving behind:

> Wenn sie an diesen Gesellschaften teilnahm – und es konnte heute nicht zum erstenmal der Fall sein, da sie sich in die Bräuche so eingeweiht zeigte –, was mochte ihr daranliegen, einem dieser Kavaliere oder ihnen allen zu Willen zu sein? Ja, konnte sie überhaupt etwas anderes sein als eine Dirne? Konnte alle diese Weiber etwas anderes sein? Dirnen – kein Zweifel. Auch wenn sie

[101] "The man replied with a wave of his hand which was anything but servant-like, so that objection was out of the question. The ridiculously high silk hat of the coachman towered up into the night. The wind was blowing a gale; violet clouds raced across the sky. Fridolin felt that, after his previous experience, there was nothing for him to do but to get into the carriage. It started the moment he was inside" (78).
[102] "His life, it seemed, would not have the slightest meaning any more, if he did not succeed in finding the incomprehensible woman who at this very moment was paying for his safety" (78).

> alle noch irgenein zweites, sozusagen bürgerliches Leben neben diesem führten, das ein Dirnenleben war (60)[103]

This realization is significant, since it not only provides a rational explanation for what has just transpired, but it also provides an explanation for his rejection at the ball the night before. That event, which constituted a rejection in the Communicative domain of Fridolin's assertion of deferred identity, initially triggered Fridolin's crisis as a result of his inability to recognize the "carnival comedy" being played out there.

There is no chance, nor was there ever a chance, that Fridolin might have actually "chosen" identity he had decided not to pursue (or had been unable to pursue) in youth. The belief that he might yet realize such identity was the actual fantasy he had been chasing, while his "adventures" had merely been props aimed at restoring the belief that that identity was still valid, and could be deferred yet longer. The notion that he had ever truly had a choice between identities was a fallacy, and is dramatically illustrated as he arrives in Vienna at the end of his adventures. Crashing along at the same run-on tempo as the sentence that describes its progress, the coach finally comes to an abrupt halt, and both doors open simultaneously, taunting him with an empty choice:

> Der Wagen began zu holpern, fuhr bergab, immer rascher, Fridolin, von Unruhe, von Angst erfaßt, war eben davon, eines der blinden Fenster zu serschmettern, als der Wagen plötzlich stillstand. Beide Türme öffneten sich gleichzeitig wie durch einen

[103] "If she attended these affairs – and since she seemed to understand the rules so well it could not be her first time – what difference could it make to her if she belonged to one of the cavaliers, or to all? Indeed, could she possibly be anything but a woman of easy virtue? Were any of them anything else? That's what they were, without a doubt, even if all of them led another, more normal life, so to speak, besides this one of promiscuity" (79).

> Mechanismus, als wäre nun Fridolin ironischerweise die Wahl zwischen rechts und links gegeben. (61)[104]

In truth, no matter which door he finally chooses – left or right – both will deposit him back in primary identity and the same "waking" life – his life as physician, husband, and father.

Although Fridolin still experiences a reflexive impulse to return to the masquerade, in his heart he recognizes the futility of such an effort. Any attempt to proceed can only destroy what he has, while leaving what he sought tantalizingly out of reach:

> Eine Sekunde locket es ihn, den Weg zurück zu nehmen, in der Nähe des Hauses der weiteren Dinge zu harren. Doch er stand sofort ab, in der Erwägung, daß er sich in schlimme Gefahr begeben hätte und der Lösung des Rätsels doch kaum näher gekommen wäre. (62)[105]

As the final chapters of the novella will demonstrate, foreclosure is complete. The loss of asymmetry that allowed a Narrative domain to assert itself as an alternative and concurrently competing Idiolect has been rectified and the Narrative domain once again subordinate to Idiolect. Deferred identity is not completely lost, since it belongs to the temporal succession of symbolized meaning and identity. In the contemporary field of

[104] "The carriage began to jolt, going down hill, faster and faster. Fridolin, uneasy and alarmed, was on the point of smashing one of the blind windows, when the carriage suddenly stopped. Both doors opened together, as if by some mechanism, and as though Fridolin had been ironically given the choice between one side or the other" (81).

[105] "For a second he felt tempted to retrace his steps and to wait in the vicinity for further developments. But he gave up the idea when he realized that he would only expose himself to grave danger without solving the mystery" (82-83).

meaning, however, it is expressible only in sublimated form – as dream, fantasy, or the creative processes. Not only would any attempt to return to his nocturnal encounters be futile (it would not return him to the mysterious twilight state in which he had experienced them), but it would pose a renewed danger to the integrity of his marriage, career, reputation, and ultimately, identity. He has no choice but to return home.

Fridolin must still come to terms with the emotions evoked by the metaphoric death of deferred identity as a realizable, potential identity. His expulsion from the masquerade and the resulting invalidation by that the discursive community revealed that his claim to that identity was a pretension. In this sense, Fridolin's entire nocturnal search for the fulfillment of his "potential" becomes something of a hollow mockery and only adds to his despair:

> Dieser Gemütszustand war so unerträglich, daß Fridolin beinah bedauerte, von dem Strolch, dem er begegnet war, nicht angefallen worden zu sein, ja beinah bedauerte, nicht mit einem Messerstich zwischen den Rippen an einer Planke in der verlorenen Gasse zu liegen. So hätte diese unsinnige Nacht mit ihren läppischen, abgebrochenen Abenteuern am Ende doch eine Art von Sinn erhalten. (62-63)[106]

Fridolin is left to face the reality that he is *not* the sort of man who engages in frivolous extra-marital affairs, nor is he a man who demands satisfaction for every insult to his

[106] "This state of mind was so unbearable that it almost made him sorry the tramp had not attacked him; in fact, he almost regretted that he wasn't lying against the fence in the deserted street with a knife gash in his side. That, at least, might have given some significance to this senseless night with its childish adventures, all of which had been so ruthlessly cut short" (83).

honor or who impulsively demonstrates his virile masculinity by dueling or fencing. He does not possess the kind of "courage" or impulsivity necessary for such kinds of activities. Rather, he is at heart a prudent man, a careful and conscientious provider and a faithful husband and father.

The forced recognition of the limitations in his underlying character is difficult for Fridolin to accept, and not merely because he must give up the various manifestations of deferred identity. That recognition also threatens his sense of security in his primary identity making him feel not only inadequate to win over another woman, but also inadequate in his relationship to Albertine:

> So heimzukehren, wie er nun im Begriff war, erschien ihm geradezu lächerlich. Aber noch war nichts verloren. Morgen war auch ein Tag. Er schwor sich zu, nicht zu ruhen, ehe er das schöne Weib wiedergefunden, dessen blendende Nacktheit ihn berauscht hatte. Und nun erst dachte er an Albertine, – doch so, als hätte er auch sie erst zu erobern, als könnte sie, als dürfte sie nicht früher wieder die Seine werden, ehe er sie mit all den anderen von heute nacht, mit der nackte Frau, mit Pierrette, mit Marianne, mit dem Dirnchen aus dem engen Gasse hintergegangen. (63)[107]

[107] "It seemed particularly ridiculous to return home, as he now intended doing. But nothing was lost yet. There was another day ahead, and he swore that he would not rest until he had found again the beautiful woman whose dazzling nakedness had so intoxicated him. It was only now that he thought of Albertine, *but with a feeling that she, too, would first have to be won*. He could not, must not, be reunited with her until he had deceived her with all the other women of the night. With the naked woman, with Pierrette, with Marianne, with Mizzi in the narrow street. And shouldn't he also try to find the insolent student who had bumped into him […]" (83-84) [italics mine].

With this realization, Fridolin makes it clear that his pursuit of deferred identity was a way of proving himself suitable or worthy as a partner for his wife, Albertine, as much as it was an effort to recapture his youth. Failing to follow through on any of his adventures, on the other hand, diminishes Fridolin's worth in his own eyes. By returning to complete the various aborted affairs of that night's journey, Fridolin will prove that he is capable of winning Albertine, and thus validate primary identity.

This insecurity returns us to that specific vulnerability in their relationship mentioned briefly above – namely, the implication that Fridolin, not Albertine, has made the better match, and that Fridolin has managed to woo Albertine successfully only because she was so much younger than he, and therefore vulnerable to his more mature charms. Whether or not this is true is of no consequence to the narrative – indeed, it remains unresolved. What is essential is that Fridolin and Albertine both perceive it to be true (as Albertine's dream will substantiate). Thus, even as deferred identity is foreclosed upon and the crisis that it engendered begins to approach resolution, a second crisis arises. That second crisis is created by the emergence of the awareness that he might have won his wife's hand not so much on his own merit, but through his cunning (and his demonstrated predilection for young girls). The emergence of this second crisis once again brings about an abrupt shift, and the devaluation of primary identity. It likewise deranges the boundary between Self and Other while destabilizing symbolized meaning. Fridolin returns to his preoccupation with contagion, explaining away his behavior of the night before and his traumatic crisis as being the result of a disease process and fever delirium:

> Und wieder fiel ihm ein, daß er möglicherweise schon den Keim einer Todeskrankheit im Leibe trug. Wäre es nicht zu albern, daran zu sterben, daß einem ein diphtheriekrankes Kind ins gesicht gehustet hatte? Vielleicht war er schon krank. Hatte er nicht Fieber? Lag er in diesem Augenblick nicht daheim zu Bett, – und all das, was er erlebt zu haben glaubte, waren nichts als Delirien gewesen?! (63)[108]

This second crisis regarding the validity of his claim to Albertine certainly played a significant role in his initial crisis of foreclosing identity and represented the true underlying basis of it. The traumatic symptoms and the limbo-like state that Fridolin has experienced remain in the face of this renewed crisis. Seeking to reassure himself that he is rooted in reality, Fridolin checks his own vital signs and opens his eyes wide:

> Fridolin riß die Augen so weit auf als möglich, strich sich über Stirn und Wangen, fühlte nach seinem Puls. Kaum beschleunigt. Alles in Ordnung. Er war völlig wach. (63)[109]

It is this gesture that gives Kubrick's film its title, *Eyes Wide Shut¸* for although Fridolin is awake and not feverish in the literal sense, he is still in the throes of a crisis that warps his perceptions until they are no more a refection of reality than a dream would be. Indeed, it is possible to equate Fridolin's "adventures" with a dream, since those

[108] "Again the thought came to him that even now the germ of a fatal disease might be in his body. Wouldn't it be silly to die just because a child with diphtheria had coughed in his face? Perhaps he was already ill. Wasn't he feverish? Perhaps at this moment he was lying at home in bed – and everything he thought he had experienced was merely delirium?" (84).

[109] "Fridolin opened his eyes as wide as possible, passed his hand over his forehead and cheeks and felt his pulse. It scarcely beat faster. Everything was alright. He was completely awake" (84).

adventures reflect his inner process rather than the external reality of those events. (In the final chapters of the novella we will finally see the reality behind each of these nocturnal encounters.) At the same time, the stage is now set for Albertine's dream, which will demonstrate a more psychologically integrated method of dealing with conflicted identity. In its comparison with Fridolin's dream-like experiences, that dream will possess an even greater validity. Albertine's dream adequately holds incommensurate subjectivity, while Fridolin's adventures do not.

For the time being, Fridolin returns home, relieved to have escaped his rather sordid adventures and, despite his misgivings and desire to return to his encounters, he is nonetheless happy simply to regain his former life:

> Die Häuser lagen noch im Dunkel, wenig vereinzelte Fenster waren erleuchtet. Fridolin glaubte zu fühlen, wie die Menschen allmählich erwachten, es war ihm, als sähe er sie in ihren Betten sich recken und rüsten zu ihrem armseligen, sauren Tag. Auch ihm stand einer bevor, aber doch nicht armselig und trüb. Und mit einem seltsamen Herzklopfen ward er sich freudig bewußt, daß er in wenigen Stunden schon im weißen Leinenkittel zwischen den Betten seiner Kranken herumgehen würde. (64)[110]

In this last expression of satisfaction with his life, which he characterizes as "not pitiful and dull" when compared with that of others, we see the beginnings of a process of

[110] "The houses were still enveloped in darkness, though here and there a few windows were lighted and Fridolin thought he could feel the people gradually awakening. It seemed that he could see them stretching themselves in their beds and preparing for their pitiful and strenuous day. A new day faced him too, but for him it wasn't pitiful and dull. And with a strange, happy beating of his heart, he realized that in a few hours he would be walking around between the beds of his patients in his white hospital coat" (85).

sublimation, whereby Fridolin's fantasy-based experiences contribute towards the quality of his "waking" life. The description recalls the beginning of the novella, in which the morning after the *Redout* is described as grey, and the day that follows as "nüchtern und vorbestimmt in Alltagspflicht" (12), however while that morning called forth memories of the narcissistic injury sustained at the ball, this new morning promises the eventual resolution of crisis.

3.4 Albertine's Dream and the Sublimation of Conflicted Subjectivity

Throughout the second, third, and fourth chapters of the novella, we witnessed Fridolin's futile quest to *act out* and thereby *realize* deferred identity. Those nocturnal adventures are doomed to fail, since Fridolin is essentially unwilling to destroy primary identity by committing infidelity. He is truly seeking validation that deferred identity is still defensible in the Communicative domain however at no point does Fridolin do more than contemplate the possibility of acting on his forbidden impulses. Indeed, most, if not all of Fridolin's perceptions of opportunity in each of these encounters is an illusion. Caught in the throes of traumatic crisis and competing currents of subjectivity, Fridolin's perception of events is distorted, interpreted via an alternate symbolized apprehension of meaning and reality that had once existed as a Narrative domain (fantasy). As the overflow of semiotic current (trauma) strengthens that Narrative domain, the natural asymmetry that would ordinarily subordinate the Narrative to Idiolect is temporarily lost. That Narrative domain itself becomes a secondary Idiolect (Fridolin's apprehension of symbolized meaning), existing side by side in fluctuating dominance with primary

Idiolect. As in a dream, Fridolin interprets the events that occurred during his nocturnal adventures via a symbolized reality that differs from the shared reality of the Communicative domain.

The emergence of one of Fridolin's Narrative domains as a competing symbolized domain does indeed resemble a dream in its autonomy from the authority of Idiolect as *the* apprehension of "reality." It differs from a dream, however, in very essential ways. Unlike a dream, in which Idiolect is nearly always unavailable for comparison with the Narrative domain out of which it arises, the loss of asymmetry does not allow Fridolin's Narrative domain to supplant Idiolect (i.e., he does not suffer a complete psychotic break). Rather, his awareness fluctuates between Idiolect and a Narrative domain with each vying for ascendance. In consequence, his adventures are always anchored to some degree in the realistic awareness that acting on the impulses that arise in the Narrative domain could lead to the destruction and loss of his primary identity – e.g., career, marriage. In addition, Fridolin's "adventures" differ from dream in that the sensory experiences that initiate the semiotic current are derived from real-world experiences. In terms of fulfilling desires as a manifestation of deferred identity, Fridolin is limited to real-world sensory experiences. The sensory experiences that he seeks out via his actions are themselves limited by the real-world consequences of those actions. Fridolin's acting out, in other words, is not an effective means of dealing with the crisis of deferred identity and the crisis of its immanent foreclosure.

Unlike Fridolin, Albertine deals with the narcissistic injury inflicted at the previous night's ball by *sublimating* her impulses to act on deferred identity, enriching

her primary identity and relationships by redirecting the energy produced by those impulses. As we saw in Albertine's description of her infatuation with the Danish officer, her desire for a relationship with him generated an energy that she was at once able to reinvest in her relationship with Fridolin:

> "Zu allem glaubte ich mich bereit; dich, das Kind, meine Zukunft hinzugeben, glaubte ich mich so gut wie entschlossen, und zugleich – wirst du es verstehen? – warst du mir teuerer als je. Gerade an diesem Nachmittag, du mußt dich noch erinnern, fügte es sich, daß wir so vertraut über tausende Dinge, auch über unsere gemeinsame Zukunft, auch über das Kind plauderten, wie schon seit lange nicht mehr." (14)[111]

As a part of that ability to sublimate that energy, Albertine's arguably greater psychological integration allows her to express and hold deferred identity adequately in one or more Narrative domains – in this case, expressed as a dream.

Albertine takes up essentially the same themes in her dream that we saw emerge in Fridolin's traumatic process: the perception of the loss of limitless possibilities through her marriage to one man, disappointment with her social status and with the prosody of her present life, among others. Unlike Fridolin, however, Albertine is not only able to pinpoint those aspects of identity of which she feels bereft, she is able to compensate for

[111] "'I thought I was ready for anything. I had practically resolved to give up on you, the child, my future, and at the same time – if you can understand it? – you were dearer to me than ever. That same afternoon – surely you remember – we discussed many things very intimately, among others our common future, and our child'" (10).

that bereavement through her dream, which is not limited by real-world opportunity or, most importantly, by real-world consequences.

The dream, which Albertine relates to Fridolin on his return home after his adventures (e.g., his "dream"), begins at the little villa on Lake Wörther, where Fridolin and Albertine were first engaged:

> Sie aber began: "Erinnerst du dich noch des Zimmers in der kleinen Villa am Wörthersee, wo ich mit den Eltern im Sommer unserer Verlobung gewohnt habe?" (66)[112]

The dream begins with the eve of their marriage. This location not only frames the dream as an examination of their relationship, it also recalls the actual circumstances of their courtship, which were indirectly touched upon earlier in the narrative – namely, that Fridolin wooed Albertine when she was just barely seventeen years of age and as such, relatively inexperienced. Being so young – substantially younger than Fridolin – she had not yet had a chance to be with anyone but him as she alluded earlier that evening during their quarrel. As the couple related their "infatuations" in Denmark, Albertine chides Fridolin that:

> "Sechzehn vorbei, ja, Fridolin. Und doch –" sie sah ihm hell in die Augen – "lag es nicht an mir, daß ich noch jungfräulich deine Gattin wurde."
>
> "Albertine!" Und sie erzählte:

[112] "She began: 'Do you still remember the room in the little villa on Lake Wörther, where I lived with Mother and Father the summer we became engaged?'" (89).

"Es war am Wörthersee, ganz kurz vor unserer Verlobung, Fridolin, da stand an einem schönen Sommerabend ein sehr hübscher junger Mensch an meinem Fenster, [...]" (18)[113]

She then reveals that the young man at the window with whom she might have had a spontaneous sexual encounter had been Fridolin himself. Beyond the teasing in this exchange, there is also a sense that she was vulnerable to his charms and greater maturity as a result of her tender age and that she was therefore easily enamored. Fridolin's appearance at her window put an end to her chance to have any other romantic or sexual experiences before marrying.

Certainly Albertine's young age only stresses the notion that her possibilities prior to her marriage were endless. On the eve of her marriage to Fridolin, she feels as though she were arriving "like an actress on a stage":

"So fing der Traum nämlich an, daß ich in dieses Zimmer trat, ich weiß nicht woher – wie eine Schauspielerin auf die Szene." (66)[114]

Unlike Albertine, however, an actress would have the opportunity to play many roles, and if she deferred playing one role, she might take it up later when the role she is currently playing is through. This expectation of limitless possibility is only substantiated as she goes to her wardrobe to see whether her wedding dress has arrived (its absence perhaps

[113] "'Past sixteen, yes, Fridolin. But it wasn't my fault that I was a virgin when I became your wife.' She looked at him brightly.
'Albertina—!'
But she continued:
'It was a beautiful summer evening at Lake Wörther, just before our engagement, and a very handsome young man stood before my window […]'" (15-16).

[114] "'Well, it was where the dream began, I was entering this house, like an actress stepping onto the stage – I don't know where I came from'" (89).

indicating that she is really too young to marry). Instead, she finds and entire array of other, splendid costumes among which she finds it difficult to choose:

> "Aber das Brautkleid war noch nicht da. Oder irrte ich mich vielleicht? Ich öffnete den Schrank, um noch zu sehen, da hingen statt des Brautkleides eine ganze Menge von anderen Kleidern, Kostüme eigentlich, opernhaft, prächtig, orientalistisch. Welches soll ich dann nur zur Hochzeit anziehen?" (66-67)[115]

Albertine's notion of marriage is romanticized and not grounded in any realistic expectation. Her inability to decide which costume she will wear, and hence which role she will play in the marriage demonstrates her naïve expectation that her possibilities in life will first become available through her marriage, rather than being limited by it. Albertine's perception of marriage is still colored by preconceived notions derived from childhood narratives, fairytales, and fantasies. The actual encounter between Fridolin and his bride is described as a fairytale in which they are clothed as a prince and a princess:

> "[…] Galeerensklaven hatten dich hergerudert, ich sah sie eben im Dunkel verschwinden. Du warst sehr kostbar gekleidet, in Gold und Seide, hattest einen Dolch mit Silbergehänge an der Seite und hobst mich aus dem Fenster. Ich war jetzt auch herrlich angetan, wie eine Prinzessin [...]" (67)[116]

[115] "'But my wedding dress hadn't yet arrived. I thought I might be mistaken, and I opened the wardrobe to look. Instead of the wedding dress a great many other clothes, like fancy dress costumes, were hanging there, opera-like, gorgeous, Oriental. Which shall I wear to the wedding?'" (89-90).
[116] "'Galley slaves had rowed you to the house. I had just seen them disappearing in the darkness. You were dressed in marvelous gold and silver clothes, and had a dagger in a silver sheath hanging by your side. You lifted me down from the window. I, too, was gorgeously dressed, like a princess'" (90).

The connection between Albertine's early expectations of marriage and childhood fairytales recalls the opening lines of the novella, in which Albertine and Fridolin as a "happy couple" read aloud to their little daughter:

> Vierundzwanzig braune Sklaven ruderten die prächtige Galeere,
> die den Prinzen Amigad zu dem Palast des Kalifen bringen sollte.
> (11)[117]

Certainly the dream derives its contents from the day's events, however, at the same time, the book that Albertine and Fridolin read to their daughter as she begins to doze off and dream constitutes a narrative that will inform the daughter's expectations of marriage, just as it did Albertine's. In addition, the idyllic scene of that opening passage, in which the happy young couple read to their young child, is an enactment of the family ideal, and the dissolution of that scene into the quarrel stresses the important dichotomy between expectation and real experience. The repetition of the fairytale early in Albertine's dream gives us the sense that there has been a promise already in childhood that marriage should be like a fairytale – a story in which, like a dream, there are no real-world limitations placed upon its expansive possibilities. Even as that fairytale abides, however, there is already a premonition that it must end and that there is sorrow yet to come. In response to Albertine's description of how much he loved her in the dream, Fridolin interjects:

> "Du [liebtest] mich hoffentlich auch," meinte Fridolin mit einem unsichtbaren bösen Lächeln.

[117] "Twenty-four brown-skinned slaves rowed the splendid galley which was to bring Prince Amigad to the palace of the caliph" (5).

> "Ich glaube, noch viel mehr," erwiderte Albertine ernst. "Aber, wie soll ich dir das erklären – trotz der innigsten Umarmung war unsere Zärtheit ganz schwermütig wie mit einer Ahnung von vorbestimmten Leid." (67-68)[118]

The dream's positive, fairytale atmosphere does indeed end abruptly, and the couple suddenly and inexplicably find themselves divested of their fine clothes:

> "Doch nun war etwas Fürchterliches geschehen. Unsere Kleider waren fort. Ein Entsetzen ohnegleichen erfaßte mich, brennende Scham bis zu innerer Vernichtung, zugleich Zorn gegen dich, als wärst du allein an dem Unglück schuld; – und all das: Entseltzen, Scham, Zorn war an Heftigkeit mit nichts zu vergleichen, was ich im Wachsein empfunden habe." (68)[119]

It is unlikely that the loss of their clothing is meant to indicate an outright material poverty as much as it represents the loss of the *costumes* the couple had been wearing – that of a prince and a princess and along with it, the promise of a fairytale life. Their social standing as a married couple, we can infer, is not what Albertine had expected and quite possibly, not what Fridolin has led her to expect. (The narrative never clarifies whether Fridolin misrepresented their future together, whether Albertine simply had inflated expectations as a result of her youth and inexperience, or both). Certainly

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[118] "'I hoped you loved me, too,' remarked Fridolin with an invisible, malicious smile.
'Even more than you did me,' replied Albertina seriously, 'but how can I explain it – in spite of the intensity of our happiness our love was also sad, as if filled with some presentiment of sorrow'" (91).

[119] "'But something terrible happened: our clothes were gone. I was seized with an unheard of terror and a shame so burning that it almost consumed me. At the same time I was angry with you, as though you were to blame for the misfortune. This sensation of terror, shame and anger was much more intense than anything I had ever felt when awake'" (91).

Albertine blames Fridolin for their lack of status and the dissolution of the existence she had believed would be theirs. It is difficult to gauge from the narrative itself how realistic Albertine's prospects might have been to marry up and therefore, to enhance her standing through a better match. What is essential is that both partners appear to feel that this is the case, as is indicated by Albertine's resentment towards Fridolin (expressed in the dream), and Fridolin's sense that he needs both to enhance his own standing, and to win Albertine by so doing.

In Albertine's dream, Fridolin is conscious of what he has failed to provide, and he rushes off to acquire what he can in order to rectify the situation. When he is gone, Albertine professes to be joyful, singing a melody she had heard at the masked ball the night before:

> "Du aber im Bewußtsein deiner Schuld stürtest davon, nackt wie du warst, um hinabzusteigen und uns Gewänder zu verschaffen. Und als du verschwunden warst, wurde mir ganz leicht zumut. Du tatest mir weder leid, noch war ich in Sorge um dich, ich war nur froh, daß ich allein war, lief glückselig auf der Wiese umher und sang: es war die Melodie eines Tanzes, die wir auf der Redoute gehört haben." (68)[120]

Her joyful reaction at his departure and her invocation of the ball, at which she had pretended to possess a greater social standing, suggests that in Fridolin's absence, her

[120] "'Aware of your guilt, you raced away, naked as you were, to go and get clothes for us. When you had disappeared I felt very joyful. I neither felt sorry for you, nor did I worry about you. I was simply happy to be alone and I ran cheerfully about in the meadow singing the melody of a dance we had heard at the masked ball'" [translation mine].

potential to achieve a higher standing is restored. Even in his temporary absence, she is able to fantasize freely as a means of restoring deferred identity (herself as the wife of a more prosperous man). That assumption is further substantiated by the arrival of the Danish officer, for whom she had entertained an "infatuation" the previous summer:

> "Ich aber lag plötzlich auf der Wiese hingestreckt im Sonnenglanz, – viel schöner, als ich je in Wirklichkeit war, und während ich so dalag, trat aus dem Wald ein Herr, ein junger Mensch hervor, in einem hellen, modernen Anzug, er sah, wie ich jetzt weiß, ungefähr aus wie der Däne, von dem ich gestern erzählt habe." (68)[121]

The dream is a correlate to Fridolin's "adventures" – itself a kind of dream – although more satisfying in that the dream itself can generate the sensory experiences and situations she desires as though they really existed. Like the naked woman at the clandestine ball who embodied the "unknown woman" of Fridolin's fantasies, the Danish officer represents the "unknown man" whom Albertine desires. He is, as she describes, always the same and yet, always a different man:

> "Er blieb wie das erstemal vor der Felswand stehen, verschwand wieder, dann kam er wieder aus dem Wald hervor, verschwand, kam aus dem Wald; das wiederholte sich zwei- oder drei- oder

[121] "'Suddenly I was lying in the meadow, stretched out in the sunlight – far more beautiful than I ever was in reality, and while I lay there, a young man wearing a light-colored fashionable suit of clothes walked out of the woods. I now realize that he looked like the Dane whom I mentioned yesterday'" (92).

hundertmal. Es war immer derselbe und immer ein anderer [...]" (69)[122]

In Albertine's dream, Fridolin is forced to atone for his failure to provide status and wealth by toiling in the "underground city" in order to procure their necessities. Just as Fridolin obliquely expressed the sense that his role as the family's provider is a burden that prevents him from working towards a higher status, so too does he appear as a kind of drudge in Albertine's dream:

> "Zugleich aber sah ich auch dich. Du eiltest in der versunkenen Stadt von haus zu Haus, von Kaufladen zu Kaufladen, bald unter Laubengängen, bald durch eine Art von türkischem Bazaar, und kauftest die schönsten Dinge ein, die du für mich nur finden könntest: Kleider, wäsche, Schuhe, Schmuck [...]" (69)[123]

In her dream, Albertine recognizes that Fridolin does his best to provide material comforts that extend beyond the basic necessities of life. He seeks out the most beautiful items he can find, including jewelry and exotic oriental wares. The procurement of those items by toil cannot match the promise of their availability in the fairytale conception of marriage at the beginning of the dream. The dream is an expression of deferred identity and Albertine's expectation of a match that would have afforded her a higher social status. Accordingly, she is therefore nonplused by his efforts.

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[122] "'He stopped before the wall of rock, vanished and came out of the woods again, appearing and disappearing two, or three, or a hundred times. It was always the same man and yet always different'" (93).
[123] "'At the same time I could see you hurrying from the house to house, from shop to shop in the buried city, now walking underneath arbors, then passing through a sort of Turkish bazaar. You were buying the most beautiful things you could find for me: clothes, linen, shoes, and jewelry'" (92-93).

Albertine's dream may represent a correlate to Fridolin's nocturnal adventures, however the dream is more satisfying in a number of critical ways. Certainly the emotions she experiences are more intense than their expressions in her waking life:

> "Aber so wie jenes frühere Gefühl von Entsetzen und Scham über alles im Wachen Vorstellbare weit hinausging, so gibt es gewiß nichts in unserer bewußten Existenz, das der Gelöstheit, der Freiheit, dem Glück gleichkommt, das ich nun in diesem Traum empfand. Und dabei hörte ich keinen Augenblick lang auf, von dir zu wissen." (70)[124]

The dream itself provides a more integrated solution to Albertine's conflict than Fridolin's adventures can ever hope to provide him, and the dream does so without jeopardizing the security of Albertine's waking life and primary identity. Albertine can acknowledge Fridolin's conscientious efforts as a provider, his faithfulness and the sacrifices he is willing to make, while at the same time punishing him for his inability to facilitate the realization of her deferred identity. She can, in other words, act wholly on the behalf of deferred identity by taking revenge upon him without being checked by the recognition of what is good in the relationship and her primary identity. By expressing her conflict in dream, Albertine is able to live the "double existence" that Fridolin also desires, however she is able to do so in such a way that the energy of that second, secret life can be sublimated, enhancing her waking life with Fridolin.

[124] "'Just as that earlier feeling of terror of shame went beyond anything I have ever felt in the waking state, so nothing in our conscious existence can be compared with the feeling of release, of freedom, of happiness, which I now experienced. Yet I didn't for one moment forget you'" (94).

Even as Albertine is enjoying this fulfilling (if temporary) expression of deferred identity, she is simultaneously aware that Fridolin is denied similar fulfillment. In an echo of Fridolin's adventures, Albertine herself sees his rejection and the death of foreclosure brought about by his unwillingness to *act* on his impulses to be unfaithful:

> "[...] ich sah dich, ich sah, wie du ergriffen wurdest, von Soldaten, glaube ich, auch geistlicher waren darunter; irgendwer, ein riesengroßer Mensch, fesselte deine Hände, und ich wußte, daß du hingerichtet werden solltest. Ich wußte es ohne Mitleid, ohne Schauer, ganz von fern." (70)[125]

Having been seized by soldiers and, ironically, priests (which recalls the costumed figures at the clandestine masquerade), Fridolin is brought before the Queen. Albertine recognizes this woman as none other than the girl Fridolin essentially trapped, naked, on the ledge of a bathing hut:

> "[...] ich wußte, daß sie das Mädchen vom dänischen Strande war, das du einmal des Morgens nackt auf der Terrasse einer Badehütte gesehen hattest." (71)[126]

Like the masked woman, the girl from Denmark is an articulation of the "other, unknown woman" whom Fridolin might desire. While Fridolin's response to Albertine's

[125] "'Just as that earlier feeling of terror of shame went beyond anything I have ever felt in the waking state, so nothing in our conscious existence can be compared with the feeling of release, of freedom, of happiness, which I now experienced. Yet I didn't for one moment forget you. In fact, I saw that you had been seized – by soldiers, I think – and there were also priests among them. Somebody, a gigantic person, tied your hands, and I knew that you were to be executed. I knew it, without feeling any sympathy for you and without shuddering'" (94-95).

[126] "'I realized that she was the girl at the seashore in Denmark, the one you had once seen nude, in the morning, on the ledge of a bathing-hut'" (96-97).

"infatuation" had been one of lasting jealousy, however, Albertine is not threatened by Fridolin's "infatuation" with that girl, recognizing that even if she were the most powerful and desirable woman imaginable (a queen), and even if his "life" depended upon committing an indiscretion with her, Fridolin will, as a matter of course, remain faithful to her:

> "Sie fragte dich – ich hörte die Worte nicht, aber ich wußte es –, ob du bereit seist, ihr Geliebter zu werden, in diesem Fall war dir die Todesstrafe erlassen. Du schütteltest verneinend den Kopf. Ich wunderte mich nicht, denn es war vollkommen in der Ordnung und konnte gar nicht anders sein, als daß du mir alle Gefahr hin und in alle Ewigkeit die Treue halten mußtest." (71)[127]

In their waking life, such recognition of Fridolin's faithfulness would constitute a profound expression of trust in the relationship. Within the context of the dream, however it is emasculating. Contrary to what a young wife and mother would desire (Albertine's primary identity), Fridolin's faithfulness once again stresses that he is a kind of "drudge," and not at all the virile, masculine "prince" Albertine had expected. His very underlying nature makes any other life than their own common existence unavailable to him while at the same time, in the dream, Albertine experiences limitless possibilities in Fridolin's absence.

[127] "'She asked you – I couldn't hear the woods, but I knew it was so – whether you were willing to be her lover, for in that case the death penalty would be remitted. You shook your head, refusing. I wasn't surprised, for it seemed natural and inevitable that you should be faithful to me, under all circumstances'" (96).

Albertine's initial expectation of Fridolin, whether realistic or not, shaped Albertine's subjectivity and apprehension of meaning (Idiolect), where both of these are constructed in the intersection of memory (past experience) and expectation. When life with Fridolin turned out to be generally more prosaic than she had anticipated, this potential identity was deferred, just as Fridolin's expectations for himself were deferred. Inhabiting solely that deferred identity in her dream, what would delight Albertine as a young wife and mother – Fridolin's faithfulness – now disgusts her as a demonstration of the weakness that betrays his lack of virility and worth. Albertine can reject Fridolin, his effort, and everything he provides that, outside of this dream-reality would seem worthy, and even laudable:

> "Doch du grüßtest mich lächelnd mit den Augen, wie zum Zeichen, daß du meinen Wunsch erfüllt hattest, und mir alles brachtest, wessen ich bedurfte: – Kleider und Schuhe und Schmuck. Ich aber fand dein Gebahren über alle Maßen töricht und sinnlos, und es lockte mich, dich zu verhöhnen, dir ins Gesicht zu lachen, – und gerade darum, weil du aus Treue zu mir die Hand einer Fürstin ausgeschlagen, [...]plötzlich entschwanden wir einander, und ich wußte: wir waren aneinander vorbeigeflogen. Da wünschte ich, du solltest doch wenigstens mein Lachen hören, gerade während man dich ans Kreuz schlüge. – Und so lachte ich

auf, so schrill, so laut ich konnte. Das war das Lachen, Fridolin, –
mit dem ich erwacht bin." (72)[128]

It is painfully obvious to Fridolin that Albertine's dream provided by far the better satisfaction and fulfillment of her desires than did his dream-like adventures set in the real world. Unable or unwilling to destroy his primary identity for the sake of what he has deferred, he has had to seek his fulfillment in the initial dalliances of illicit trysts that he then abruptly breaks off – a metaphoric *coitus interuptus*. Albertine, on the other hand, was free to carry her desires to their logical conclusion, indulging the series of men that the Danish officer became, while at the same time rejecting Fridolin's honest efforts to provide, and even mocking him at the moment of his execution. (The film emphasizes her sexual fulfillment by having Alice (Albertine) explicitly mention the fact that she has intercourse with countless men in the dream.) In comparison to this dream, Fridolin's "adventures" now seem laughable and scarcely adequate as a means of expressing, let alone holding, deferred identity:

Sie schwieg und blieb ohne jede Regung. Auch er rührte sich nicht
und sprach kein Wort. Jedes wäre in diesem Augenblick matt,
lügnerisch und feig erschienen. Je weiter sie in ihrer Erzählung
fortgeschritten war, um so lächerlicher und nichtiger erschien ihm
seine eigenen Erlebnisse, so weit sie bisher gediehen waren, und er

[128] "'Your eyes smiled at me as of to show that you had fulfilled my wish and had brought me everything I needed: clothing and shoes and jewels. But I thought your actions senseless beyond description and I wanted to make fun of you, to laugh in your face – because you had refused the queen's hand out of faithfulness to me. […] I lost sight of you: and I realized we had flown past each other. I hoped that you would, at least, hear my laughter when they were nailing you to the cross. – And so I laughed, as shrill and loud as I could – that was the laugh, Fridolin, that you heard when I awoke'" (97-98).

> schwor sich zu, sie alle zu Ende zu erleben, sie ihr dann getreulich zu berichten und so Vergeltung zu üben an dieser Frau, die sich in ihrem Traum enthüllt hatte als die, die sie war, treulos, grausam und verräterisch, und die er in diesem Augenblick tiefer zu hassen glaubte, als er sie jemals geliebt hatte. (72-73)[129]

Fridolin is emasculated by Albertine's somnolent faith in his unwillingness to be unfaithful to her, and his fears that he is indeed neither virile nor daring enough to have won Albertine's hand had she not been so young and vulnerable are seemingly substantiated by Albertine herself. Albertine's dream, an expression of *her* deferred identity, essentially invalidates Fridolin's deferred identity within the compact of the private discursive community – a community formed by their relationship with one another. Piquantly expressed as Albertine's hideous, derisive laugh which Fridolin had heard just before he awakened her, that invalidation fans the flames of Fridolin's crisis, and he resolves to trump the dream's power by revisiting each of his previous encounters, bringing each to its conclusion. At the same time, even as he vows to do so as a means of taking his revenge on Albertine for her faithlessness, Fridolin is aware that the enmity between them is not real:

[129] "'Neither of them spoke or moved. Any remark at this moment would have seemed futile. The further her story progressed, the more ridiculous and insignificant did his own experiences become, at least up to date. He swore to himself that he would resume and conclude all of them. He would then faithfully report them and so take vengeance on this woman who had revealed herself as faithless, cruel and treacherous, and whom he now believed he hated more than he had ever loved her'" (98).

> Ein Schwert zwischen uns, dachte er wieder. Und dann: wie Todesfeinde liegen wir hier nebeneinander. Aber es war nur ein Wort. (73)[130]

Fridolin's quest will now take him to the scene of each of the preceding night's encounters however his efforts will only serve to effect the *emotional* resolution of his crisis. While deferred identity is foreclosed upon and no longer competing with primary identity (the Narrative domain in which deferred identity is constituted no longer competes with Idiolect for dominance). Fridolin must still seek emotional closure. More importantly, he must find a way to productively sublimate diverted subjectivity in order to prevent its future overflow into traumatic crisis.

3.5 "Not Every Dream is Truly a Dream"

Fridolin rises the next morning with the intention of revisiting each of the encounters of the preceding night, envious of the satisfaction that Albertine's dream provided her and her lack of distress. Her satisfaction following the dream allows her to sleep peacefully on, even when the maid knocks to awaken Fridolin for work:

> Manchmal, nicht immer, weckte dieses Klopfen auch sie. Heute schlief sie regungslos, allzu regungslos weiter. (74)[131]

Although he will return to each of the same places he had just visited in his "delirium" of the previous night, Fridolin's crisis will have a very different quality following the

[130] "A sword between us, he thought, we are lying here like mortal enemies. But it was only an illusion" (99).
[131] "Sometimes this knocking awakened her too. But today she was sleeping soundly; too soundly Fridolin thought" (100).

foreclosure of deferred identity – a foreclosure that is represented by his forcible expulsion from the clandestine orgy/masquerade. His primary identity is now in full ascendance and even as he prepares to return to the scene of his potential crime, he does so with the great or even possibly excessive care and organization that is characteristic of that identity:

> In seiner schwarzen Arztenstasche, wohl verwahrt, trug er Mönschskutte und Pilgerhut mit sich. Das Programm für den Tag hatte er sorgfältig, ja mit einiger Pedantrie entworfen. (74)[132]

This careful preparation is a far cry from the unconscious impulses that drove him the night before. Fridolin's first order of business is to visit Nachtigall at the shabby hotel where he was staying. There, the porter reports that Nachtigall had arrived earlier, accompanied by two men under what could be interpreted as sinister circumstances:

> Während Nachtigall sich in sein Zimmer begeben, hätten die herren seine Rechnung für die letzten vier Wochen bezahlt; als er nach einer halben Stunde nicht wieder erschienen war, hätte ihn der eine Herr persönlich heruntergeholt, worauf alle drei zum Nordbahnhof gefahren wären. (74-75)[133]

Fridolin does not waste a great deal of time speculating on whether or not this event had any particularly sinister import, nor does he attempt to find out what has become of Nachtigall. Instead, he disavows deferred identity, taking refuge in his identity as a

[132] "The cassock and pilgrim's hat were safely concealed in his black doctor's bag. He had drawn up a program for the day with great care, indeed, even a bit pedantically" (100).
[133] "While Nachtigall was in his room, the two men had paid his bill for the last four weeks. When he didn't appear after half an hour, one of them had gone up to fetch him, whereupon they all three took a cab to North Station" (101).

physician as a means of setting him apart from the squalid environment and circumstances in which he finds himself:

> Fridolin empfahl sich, es war ihm angenehm, daß er seine Arztenstasche in der Hand trug, als er aus dem Haustor trat; so würde man ihn wohl nicht für einen Bewohner dieses Hotels halten, sondern für eine Amtsperson. (75)[134]

From the hotel, Fridolin goes to Gibiser, the costumer, in order to return his cassock and pilgrim's hat. Here, as he had intended the night before, he addresses the supposed "condition" of the young girl clad as a Pierrette, whom he had seen in the clutches of two men dressed as Vehmic judges. His impulse to offer his services as a physician the night before had been a somewhat falsified gesture, and had merely constituted a means of seeing her again, possibly even of taking her with him. With primary identity and Idiolect once again restored to their privileged dominance over any Narrative domain and deferred identity, Fridolin now simply advises Gibiser to seek medical help for the girl:

> "Sie bemerkten gestern," sagte Fridolin, die eine Hand mit gespreizten Fingern auf den Bürotisch gestützt, "daß Ihr Fräulein Tochter geistig nicht ganz normal sei. Die Situation, in der wir sie betrafen, legte diese Vermutung tatsächlich nahe. Und da mich der Zufall nun einmal zum Teilnehmer oder wenigstens zum

[134] "'Fridolin took his leave. He was glad that he had his doctor's bag with him when he stepped out of the door, for anyone seeing him would not think that he was staying at the hotel, but would take him for some official person" (102).

> Zuschauer jener sonderbaren Szene gemacht hat, so möchte ich Ihnen doch nahelegen, Herr Gibiser, einen Arzt zu Rate zu ziehen." (75-76)[135]

Fridolin appears to want no more contact with little Pierrette and refutes Gibiser's accusation that his interests in the matter are pecuniary. The enchantment cast by deferred identity has been broken and his return to Gibiser's is characterized by a professional detachment that is *without* any exaggerated claim to intimacy on the basis of his office. Rather, Fridolin's visit to this, as well as to each subsequent scene where he had had an encounter the previous night, is characterized by a somewhat cold, professional detachment accompanied by the interjection of rational awareness as to the true nature of the events that occurred. In this sense, it appears that Fridolin's ultimate objective in these return visits is to present primary identity at those places where yesterday, his identity had been unstable.

The true nature of the events that took place at the costumer's is quite sordid indeed. The two men who purportedly had illicitly had their way with the "deranged" and "depraved" Pierrette are still there when Fridolin arrives, and Gibiser never called the police as he had threatened the night before. In truth, the costumer has been prostituting his young daughter, and his outrage was merely an act meant to deflect Fridolin's potential outrage, as a customer, over this side-business. His attitude is now one of imperious disinterest in Fridolin's view of the matter:

[135] "'Yesterday you said,' remarked Fridolin, one hand with outstretched fingers resting on the desk, 'that your daughter was not quite normal mentally. The situation in which we discovered her actually indicates some such thing. And since I took part in it, or was at least a spectator, I would very much like to advise you to consult a doctor'" (103).

> "Man hat sich auf anderem Weg geeinigt, Herr Doktor," bemerkte Gibiser kühl und erhob sich, als wäre eine Audienz beendet. Fridolin wandte sich zum Gehen, Gibiser öffnete beflissen die Türe, und mit unbeweglicher Miene sagte er: "Wenn der Herr Doctor wieder einen Bedarf haben sollten... Es muß ja nicht gerade ein Mönchsgewand sein." (76-77)[136]

Again, Fridolin has no intention of pursuing a tryst with the young Pierrette, even as Gibiser obliquely offers her to him (for a price). Reassured that the actual underlying circumstances of the encounter do not require his services or counsel as a physician, Fridolin leaves with what he himself characterizes as somewhat exaggerated annoyance. There are no lingering questions as to whether or not he should have taken Pierrette with him or whether he should return for her. The matter is closed, the ambiguity of his identity at that location resolved, and Fridolin simply proceeds to his work at the hospital, where his identity has not become unstable.

At the hospital, Fridolin finds renewed satisfaction in the performance of his duties as a physician, in a sense vindicated for his brusque encounter with the students from the dueling fraternity the night before by the submissive attendance of the medical students following his rounds. In contrast to that encounter, in which he had felt put upon and impotent, Fridolin now feels competent:

[136] "'We had come to another agreement,' remarked Gibiser coldly, and got up as though this were the end of an interview. He obligingly opened the door as Fridolin turned to go and said, without changing his expression: 'If the doctor should want anything again…it needn't be a monk's costume'" (104).

> Fridolin fühlte sich beinah glücklich, als er, von den Studenten gefolgt, von Bett zu Bett ging, Untersuchungen vornahm, Rezepte schrieb, mit Hilfsärzten und Wärterinnen sich fachlich besprach. (77-78)[137]

This renewal of interest in his professional life contrasts sharply with the frustration and sense of inadequacy he felt the night before, during which time he had concluded that the "excellent Dr. Roediger" was the better man for having obtained the academic title, *Doktor.* In fact, this renewal of interest seems to point towards the emergence of sublimated energy that is now being invested in his primary identity. Upon hearing that a colleague, Dr. Hügelmann, is to receive an appointment as head of the ophthalmology department, Fridolin's impulse is to integrate his desire of that higher prestige within his primary identity, rather than instead of it:

> Ich werde nie für die Leitung einer Abteilung in Betracht kommen, schon weil mir die Dozentur fehlt. Zu spät. Warum eigentlich? Man müßte eben wieder wissenschaftlich zu arbeiten anfangen oder manches Begonnene mit größerem Ernst wieder aufnehmen. Die Privatpraxis ließ immer noch Zeit genug. (78)[138]

Whether or not Fridolin will actually pursue this scientific work in order to advance his career is not of great consequence. In fact, as we will later discover when

[137] "Fridolin felt almost happy as he walked from bed to bed, followed by the students, making examinations, writing prescriptions, and having professional conversations with the assistants and nurses" (105).

[138] "I'll never be considered for the headship of a department, if for no other reason that that I've never been a *Dozent*. It's too late. But why should it be? I really ought to begin again to do scientific work or take up more seriously some of the things that I have already started. My private practice would leave me ample time for it" (106).

Fridolin relates these plans to Albertine with great animation, that he has expressed this intention before, but that this resolve does not seem to last long enough to materialize any appreciable progress:

> Er erzählte, daß die Ernennung Hügelmanns so gut wie sicher sei und sprach von seinem eigenen Vorsatz, die wissenschaftlichen Arbeiten wieder mit etwas größerer Energie aufzunehmen. Albertine kannte diese Stimmung, wußte, daß sie nicht allzulange pflegte, und ein leises Lächeln verriet ihre Zweifel. Fridolin eiferte sich, worauf Albertine mit milder Hand ihm beruhigend über ihre Haare strich. (82)[139]

What *is* important in terms of Fridolin's crisis is that he has (re-)identified a means of holding deferred identity as viably potential from *within* primary identity. A higher status as an "intellectual" is not, in other words, an identity that must be pursued from within a purely academic career – a career that Fridolin gave up in order to become a medical practitioner, and that is now foreclosed upon. Rather, the diverted current of subjectivity that gives rise to that desire can also be *sublimated*, investing primary identity with renewed vitality and interest. Such a solution also integrates some part of the diverted current of subjectivity within the primary current, thereby alleviating the crisis and symptoms of trauma to some degree.

[139] "He told her that the appointment of Hügelmann was as good as settled, and then spoke of his own determination to take up scientific work again with greater energy. Albertine knew this mood. She also knew that it usually didn't last very long and betrayed her doubts by a slight smile. When Fridolin became quite warm on the subject, she gently smoothed his hair to calm him" (113).

Upon leaving the hospital, Fridolin begins to make his way to the house where the clandestine masquerade took place. As he does so, he is already aware of the true nature of that encounter and of the banal nature of the seemingly occult events he witnessed there:

> Eine geheime Gesellschaft? Nun ja, jedenfalls geheim. Aber untereinander kannten sie sich doch? Aristokraten, vielleicht gar Herren vom Hof? Er dachte an gewisse Erzherzöge, deren man dergleichen Scherze schon zutrauen konnte. Und die Damen? Vermutlich... aus Freudenhäusern zusammengetrieben. Nun, das war keineswegs sicher. Jedenfalls ausgesuchte Ware. Aber die Frau, die sich ihm geopfert hatte? Geopfert? Warum er nur immer wieder sich einbilden wollte, daß es wirklich ein Opfer gewesen war! Eine Komödie. Selbstverständlich war das Ganze eine Komödie gewesen. (79-80)[140]

This impression that the entire event had been a comedy – quite literally a masquerade – is substantiated by the bourgeois scene that greets him when he arrives in the neighborhood he is seeking. Inconsistent with the fantastical atmosphere of the ball, the neighborhood is middle-class, more something in keeping with his own primary identity as father, husband, and physician:

[140] "A secret club? Well, yes, it certainly was a secret, though they seemed to know each other. Were they aristocrats, or perhaps eve members of the court? He thought of certain archdukes who might easily be capable of such behavior. And what about the women? Probably they were recruited from brothels. Well, that was not by any means certain, but at any rate, they seemed very attractive. But how about the woman who had sacrificed herself for him? Sacrificed? Why did he try, again and again, to make himself believe that it really was a sacrifice? It had been a joke, of course; the whole thing had been a joke […]" (108-109).

> Eine stille Gasse. In diesem Vorgarten standen Rosenstöcke, sorgfältig in Stroh gehüllt, in einem nächsten stand ein Kinderwägelchen; ein Bub, ganz in blaue Wolle gekleidet, tollte hin und her; vom Parterrefenster aus schaute eine junge Frau lachend zu. (80)[141]

When he arrives at the home at which the masquerade took place, the "unknown woman" Fridolin seeks is apparently not there. When he rings the bell to make his inquiries, a liveried servant brings a note, presumably from the home's owner, asking once again that Fridolin abandon his investigations into the matter. In that note, which is not as threatening as Fridolin expected, he sees the substantiation of his conclusion that the masquerade, the threats of danger, and possibly even the woman's "sacrifice" are a part of the comedy. The commanding tone with which Fridolin had been expelled from the masquerade the night before has been supplanted by a tone that is less secure. The double life that the attendees there had appeared to have mastered, now seem as fragile as Fridolin's own bid for a second life. The concern is for anonymity and the prevention of discovery:

> Diese Botschaft enttäuschte ihn in jeder Hinsicht; jedenfalls aber war es eine andere, als die er törichterweise für möglich gehalten hatte. Immerhin, der Ton war mekwürdig zurückhaltend, gänzlich

[141] "It was a quiet little street. There were rosebushes carefully covered with straw in a front garden, and in the next yard stood a baby carriage. A boy in a blue jersey suit was romping about and a laughing young woman watched him from a ground floor window" (110).

> ohne Schärfe. Er ließ erkennen, daß die Leute, die diese Botschaft gesandt, sich keineswegs sicher fühlten. (81)[142]

Fridolin is still resolved to find the "unknown woman" – the figure that, like Albertine's Dane, embodies the sum of his desire to escape the limitations placed on him by primary identity. The matter of the clandestine masquerade, however, is now resolved and its intrigue dissipated just as it is with the little Pierette and the costumer, Gibiser. His journey serves only to correct the misapprehensions of the previous night, and to verify that foreclosure has indeed occurred. Indeed, these visits might be compared with Fridolin's last visit to the Court Councilor, where a final examination was required to verify the demise of the patient.

Fridolin returns home for a meal with Albertine, and then returns to work for the afternoon. His next undertaking is to return to the home of the Court Counselor. Here, he tells himself, he will begin his revenge by entering into an illicit affair with Marianne, the Counselor's daughter, who had expressed a kind of hysterical interest in Fridolin:

> Ohne Aufwand besonderer Mühe konnte er hier sein Rachewerk beginnen, hier gab es für ihn keine Schwierigkeit, keine Gefahr; und das, wovor andere vielleicht zurückgeschreckt wären, der Vorrat an dem Bräutigam, das bedeutete für ihn beinah einen Anreiz mehr. (83-84)[143]

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[142] "This message disappointed him in every respect, but at any rate it was different from what hew had foolishly expected. Nevertheless,, the tone of it was strangely reserved, even kindly, and seemed to show that the people who had sent it by no means felt secure" (111).

[143] "Well – there was no chance of failure here. He could begin his work of vengeance without any special exertion and with little difficulty or danger. What might have deterred others, the betrayal of her fiancé, only made him keener" (115).

This resolve proves to be nothing more than a reflex – an emotional impulse that, lacking the support of the traumatic process and the emergence of a competing identity, will never be fulfilled. His reaction to Marianne, which had been tinged with mild distaste the evening before, is now one of total aversion. He returns none of her overtures and adopts the dispassionate attitude of a physician without making the same exaggerated claims of intimacy he had the night before:

> "Also morgen schon fahren Sie aufs Land?" [fragte Fridolin].
> Marianne sah ihn an, als wundere sie sich über den kühlen Ton seiner Fragen, und ihre Schultern senkten sich, als er mit beinah harter Stimme fortsetzte: "Ich finde das sehr vernünftig." Und er erläuterte sachlich, wie günstig die gute Luft, die neue Umgebung auf sie wirken würde.
>
> Sie saß unbeweglich, und Tränen flossen ihr über die Wangen. Er sah ohne Mitgefühl, eher mit Ungeduld; [...]. (85)[144]

The matter with Marianne is closed, and his perception of the situation there more realistic. As he continues to retrace his steps, Fridolin exhibits significantly more clarity than he had the night before, and there is an interjection of rational awareness that better allows him to evaluate events as they unfold. While foreclosure is complete, however, Fridolin still experiences some degree if the limbo-state of uncertainty and dream-like awareness characteristic of traumatic dissociation as he struggles to find emotional closure and a way to accommodated disenfranchised subjectivity:

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[144] "'So you are going to the country tomorrow?' [asked Fridolin].
Marianne seemed a little surprised at the cool tone of his question and her shoulders drooped when he continued almost harshly: 'I think that's very sensible.' And he explained in a matter-of-fact way what a favorable effect the good air and the new environment would have on her.
She sat motionless, and tears streamed down her cheeks. He saw them, feeling impatient rather than sympathetic" (117-118).

> Aber was nun? Nach Hause? Wohin sonst! [...] Er fühlte sich ungeschickt, hilflos. Alles zerfloßen ihm unter den Händen; alles wurde unwirklich, sogar sein Heim, seine Frau, sein Kind, sein Beruf, ja, er selbst, wie er so mit schweifenden Gedanken die abendlichen Straßen mechanisch weiterging. (86)[145]

As evening approaches, some degree of his half-resolved crisis returns. With the increase of clarity on his second journey, however Fridolin is no longer driven to choose one identity over another, and instead, a conscious awareness emerges that two distinct identities exist, and that he wants to retain *both* identities, even though he does not immediately recognize how he can possibly do so:

> [...] – eine Art von Doppelleben führen, zugleich der tüchtige, verläßiche, zukunftsreiche Arzt, der brave Gatte und Familienvater sein – und zugleich ein Wüstling, ein Verführer, ein Zyniker, der mit dem Menschen, mit Männer und Frauen spielte, wie ihm just die Laune ankam – das erschien ihm in diesem Augenblick als etwas ganz Köstliches; – und das Köstliche dran war, daß er später einmal, wenn Albertine sich schon längst in der Sicherheit eines ruhigen Ehe – und Familienleben geborgen wähnte, ihr kühl lächelnd all seine Sünden eingestehen wollte, um so Vergeltung zu

[145] "But what was he to do now? Go home? Where else could he go? […] He felt awkward and helpless. Everything he put his hands to turned out a failure. Everything seemed unreal: his home, his wife, his child, his profession, and even he himself, mechanically walking along through the nocturnal streets with his thoughts roaming through space" (119).

üben für das, was sie ihm in einem Traum Bitteres und Schmachvolles angetan hatte. (84)[146]

Albertine has managed to hold onto both identities – primary and deferred – with her dream, sublimating the energy of diverted subjectivity to *enhance* primary identity. Her ability to find such satisfaction, which is now a more realistic basis for Fridolin's resentment and jealousy than her imagined infidelity in Denmark, indicates a greater degree of psychological integration. Fridolin, by contrast, has been driven throughout his "adventures" by the conviction that conflicted identities must be manifested and lived out in real, waking-life. As he begins to approach the resolution of his crisis, his next attempt to find a means of preserving diverted subjectivity reflects the rigidity of this expectation:

> Nichts, niemand ging ihn an. Er verspürte ein leises Mitleid mit sich selbst. Ganz flüchtig, nicht etwa wie ein Vorsatz, kam ihm der Einfall, zu irgendeinem Bahnhof zu fahren, abzureisen, gleichgültig wohin, zu verschwinden für alle Leute, die ihn gekannt, irgendwo in der Fremde wieder aufzutauchen und ein neues Leben zu beginnen als ein anderer, neuer Mensch. Er besann sich gewisser Merkwürdiger Krankheitsfälle, die er aus

[146] "To lead a sort of double life, to be the capable, reliable physician with a future before him, the upright husband and head of a family. And at the same time a libertine, a seducer, a cynic who played with people, men and women, just as the spirit moved him – that seemed to him, at the same time, very delightful. And the most delightful part was that at some future time, long after Albertina fancied herself secure in the peacefulness at [!] of marriage and of – family life – he would confess to her, with a superior smile, all of his sins, in retribution for the bitter and shameful things she had committed against him in a dream" (115).

psychiatrischen Büchern kannte, sogenannter Doppelexistenzen: [...]. (86-87)[147]

The awareness both that he desires two separate identities at once, and that those identities cannot be lived out or held in consciousness side by side, sets the stage for the resolution of his traumatic crisis. From this notion of a pathology that would wipe away memory and allow him to live a second life within a full-fledged new identity, it is but a short leap to his final conclusion that the alternation between waking-life and dreaming-life offer just such an opportunity:

> Und in abgeschwächter Form erlebte sie wohl mancher. Wenn man aus Träumen wiederkehrte zum Beispiel? Freilich, man erinnerte sich... Aber gewiß gab es auch Träume, die man völlig vergaß, von denen nichts übrig blieb als irgendeine rätselhafte Stimmung, eine geheimnisvolle Benommenheit. Oder man erinnerte sich erst spater, viel später, und wußte nicht mehr, ob man etwas erlebt oder nur geträumt hatte. Nur – nur – – ! (87)[148]

Not only does dreaming provide a parallel existence in which deferred identity can be adequately expressed and held *without* threatening to destroy primary identity, but it allows a return to primary identity, often without the interjected awareness of the

[147] "There was nothing and no one that interested him, and he pitied himself not a little. Then the idea came to him – not deliberately but as a flash across his mind – to drive to some station, take a train, no matter where, and to disappear, leaving everyone behind. He could then turn up again, somewhere abroad, and start a new life, as a different personality. He recalled certain strange pathological cases which he had read in books on psychiatry, so called double-lives" (120).

[148] "'Many others probably experienced the same things in a lesser degree. For instance, when one comes back out of dreams. Of course, one remembers some dreams, but there must be others one completely forgets, of which nothing remains but a mysterious mood, a curious numbness. Or one doesn't remember until very much later, and doesn't even then know whether it was real or only a dream. Only a dream!" (120).

opposing existence. Those existences, in other words, exist in a temporal sequence as a means of expressing conflicted identity – identity that nevertheless originates in the simultaneity of subjectivity and a single dominant semiotic current. The traumatic crisis of mid-life crisis forces the individual to come to terms with external limitations on identity and temporal alterations to identity that are imposed upon the continuity of the current of subjectivity. In the case of this kind of traumatic crisis, dreaming, fantasy and creative expression in a Narrative domain provide the ideal means of accommodating deferred subjectivity so that it need not overflow and produce traumatic crisis.

With the groundwork laid for Fridolin to begin sublimating diverted subjectivity, only one task remains before he can achieve full closure – he must verify the death of the "unknown woman," once again reenacting the demise he cannot prevent as a physician, and marking the formal termination of his relationship with the deceased. Indeed, this last return "visit" provides the most literal reiteration of this theme, as it will be an actual corpse that he visits. Scanning the newspaper for any report if unusual events that might be tied to his experiences the night before, Fridolin discovers that a woman has committed suicide by ingesting poison:

> In einem vornehmen Hotel der inneren Stadt hatte sich heute früh eine Frau vergiftet, eine Dame, die unter dem Namen einer Baronin D. vor wenigen Tagen dort abgestiegen war, eine auffallend hübsche Dame. Fridolin fühlte sich sofort ahnungsvoll berührt. Die Dame war morgens um vier Uhr in Begleitung zweier

> Herren nach Hause gekomen, die am Tore sich von ihr verabschiedeten. (90)[149]

This incident recalls the self-poisoning of Marie B. (who, not without irony, ingested '*Sublimat'*), which occurred after she was forcibly unmasked at a previous clandestine masquerade. The similarities in Marie B. and Baronin D's stories leads Fridolin to suspect that this second poisoning must be the woman who "sacrificed" herself for him. Fridolin resolves to view the body of the woman whom he believes saved him:

> Sehen würde er sie; kein Mensch auf der Erde konnte ihn daran hindern, die Frau zu sehen, die seinetwegen ja die für ihn in den Tod gegangen war. Er was schuldig an ihrem Tod – er allein – wenn sie es war. Ja, sie war es. (91)[150]

It is impossible to say whether this is the same woman who "redeemed" Fridolin, or whether there truly were any consequences for her actions on his behalf. The fact that the woman is connected to the masquerade in Fridolin's mind alone, rather than by any evidence, only reinforces the function of this deceased woman as the corpse of Fridolin's "unknown woman" who perished along with deferred identity. In this sense, sense, however, the "unknown woman" as the symbolic object of Fridolin's desire did indeed perish to save him – that is, to save his primary identity, which was threatened by his impulses to act out deferred identity in his waking life. Fridolin himself can never

[149] "A woman had taken poison that morning in a fashionable hotel in the heart of the city. She was an unusually good-looking woman and had registered there a few days before under the name of Baroness D. At once Fridolin felt a strange presentiment. The woman had returned to the hotel at four o'clock in the morning, accompanied by two men who had left her at the door" (125).

[150] "He would see her; no one in the world could stop his seeing the woman who had died on his account; who had died, in fact, died for him. He was the cause of her death – he alone – if it were she. Yes, it was she" (127).

determine whether the body in the morgue is that of the woman who stepped forward at the ball to save him, since he never saw her face. What he does realize, however, is that the face on the corpse does not resemble the face in his imagination, which he finally recognizes had been that of his wife, Albertine all along:

> Er kannte ja nur ihren Körper, ihr Antlitz hatte er nie gesehen, nur eben einen flüchtigen Schimmer davon erhascht in der Sekunde, da er heute nacht den Tanzsaal verlassen hatte oder, richtiger gesagt, aus dem Saal gejagt worden war. Doch daß er diesen Umstand bis jetzt gar nicht erwogen, das kam daher, daß er in diesen ganzen letztverflossenen Stunden, seit er die Zeitungsnotiz gelesen, die Selbstmörderin, deren Antlitz er nicht kannte, sich mit den Zügen Albertinens vorgestellt hatte, ja, daß ihm, wie er nun erst erschaudernd wußte, ununterbrochen seine Gattin als die Frau vor Augen geschwebt war, die er suchte. (94)[151]

As Fridolin views the body of the poisoned woman, silently witnessing the formalized end of deferred identity, he simultaneously reaches the resolution of his crisis. In that moment, he realizes that it is ultimately of no consequence whether it is the same woman, or an entirely different one. Her symbolic function supercedes any literal identity

[151] "He had never seen her face, only her body. He had only snatched a hasty glance at the former when [he had left the dance hall, or rather, when] he had been driven out. Up to this moment he hadn't thought of that fact. During the time since he had read the account in the paper he had pictured the suicide, whose face he didn't know, as having the features of Albertina. In fact, he now shuddered to realize that his wife had constantly been in his mind's eye as the woman he was seeking" (130) (text in brackets missing in published translation).

and Fridolin is prepared to accept the irrevocable loss, in the abstract, of this particular object of desire:

> Denn ob die Frau, die nun da drin in der Todeskammer lag, dieselbe war, die er vor vierundzwanzig Stunden zu den wilden Klängen von Nachtigalls Klavierspiel nackt in den Armen gehalten, oder ob diese Tote irgeneine andere, eine Unbekannte, ein ganz Fremde war, der er niemals vorher begegnet; er wußte: auch wenn das Weib noch am Leben war, das er gesucht, das er verlangt, das er eine Stunde lang vielleicht geliebt hatte, und, wie immer die dieses Leben weiter lebte; – was da hinter ihm lag in der gewölbten Halle, im Scheine von flackernden Gasflammen, ein Schatten unter andern Schatten, dunkel, sinn – und geheimnislos wie sie –, ihm bedeutete es, ihm konnte es nichts anderes mehr bedeuten als, zu unwiderruflicher Verwesung bestimmt, den bleichen Leichnam der vergangenen Nacht. (100-101)[152]

The final line in this passage marks the critical turning point in Fridolin's traumatic crisis. At first glance, the phrase, "the pale corpse of the preceding night" appears to refer to the corpse belonging to "the woman of the preceding night," who is now "doomed to irrevocable decay." Careful reading shows that this reference is in fact

[152] "It did not matter to him whether the woman – now lying in the hospital morgue – was the same one he had held naked in his arms twenty-four hours before, to the wild tunes of Nachtigall's playing. It was immaterial whether this corpse was some other unknown woman, a perfect stranger whom he had never seen before. Even if this woman he had sought, desired and perhaps loved for an hour were still alive, he know that the body lying in the arched room – in the light of nickering gasflames, a shadow among shadows, dark, without meaning or mystery as the shadows themselves – could only be to him the pale corpse of the preceding night, doomed to irrevocable decay" (139).

false, since she was still living and not a corpse on the preceding night. The connection arises out of the context in which the statement is made – at the side of the woman's body. The phrase, however, which signals the resolution of Fridolin's crisis, is a covalent reference that makes a dual reference, only one of those being the woman as a corpse. At the same time and in the strictest grammatical sense, the phrase, "the pale corpse of the preceding night" more logically refers to the body of the previous night itself. The body, in other words, represents the end of the delusion or dream of deferred identity that brought him to that ball that, like all entities and manifestations of identity, is doomed to "decay and decomposition, according to eternal laws" (30).

Having borne witness to and accepted the death, not of the specific woman at the masquerade (he cannot know whether it is she), but of the waking, real-life realization of the endless possibilities of youth – manifestations of deferred identity – there is nothing left for Fridolin to do but return home. There, he finds Albertine sleeping peacefully, and with restored tenderness towards her, he resolves to tell her everything that has happened:

> Ein Gefühl von Zärtlichkeit, ja von Geborgenheit, wie er es nicht erwartet, durchdrang sein Herz. Und er nahm sich vor, ihr bald, vielleicht morgen schon, die Geschichte der vergangenen Nacht zu erzählen, doch so, als wäre alles, was er erlebt, ein Traum gewesen – und dann, erst wenn sie die ganze Nichtigkeit seiner Abenteur

> gefühlt und erkannt hatte, wollte er ihr gestehen, daß sie Wirklichkeit gewesen waren. Wirklichkeit? (101)[153]

At this moment when he himself pauses to question whether his "adventures" were real, he sees the mask that belonged to his costume the night before, placed carefully on his pillow beside Albertine in the place where his own head should now be resting. Despite all of his pedantic preparations and care with the cassock and pilgrim's hat, the mask as the very symbol of his false identity has gone astray and been found by Albertine:

The loss of the mask presents the reader with a careful metaphor for the loss of Fridolin's pretended identity and the discovery of his duplicity in at least three different discursive communities (the Communicative domain) – at the *Redout* with Albertine, at the clandestine masquerade, and now most importantly, in his relationship with Albertine:

> So konnte er auch nicht daran zweifeln, daß Albertine nach diesem Fund Mancherlei ahnte und vermutlich noch mehr und noch Schlimmeres, als sich tatsächlich ereignet hatte. Doch die Art, wie sie ihm das zu verstehen gab, ihr Einfall, die dunkele Larve neben sich auf das Polster hinzulegen, als hätte sie nun sein, des Gatten, ihr nun rätselhaft gewordenes Antlitz zu bedeuten, diese scherzhafte, fast übermütige Art, in der zugleich eine milde Warnung und die Bereitwilligkeit des Verzeihens ausgedrückt

[153] "Unexpectedly, his heart filled with a feeling of tenderness and even of security. He decided to tell her the story of the preceding night very soon – perhaps even the next day – but to tell it as though everything he had experienced had been a dream. Then, when she had fully realized the utter futility of his adventures, he would confess to her that they had been real. Real?" (140).

> schien, gab Fridolin die sichere Hoffnung, daß sie, wohl in Erinnerung ihres eigenen Traums –, was auch geschehen sein mochte, geneigt war, es nicht allzuschwer zu nehmen. (102)[154]

The secret desire to return to the (seemingly) endless possible manifestations of identity is something that Fridolin shares with Albertine, although their desire to realize deferred identity contains within itself a simultaneous disavowal of their relationship with one another. Within their own, private discursive community then, it is not only marriage and child that they share with one another, but their atavistic desires as well. Within that essentially a healthy relationship, there is room for both partners to harbor the now not so secret desire to express diverted subjectivity, provided it can be done in such a way (i.e., through dream or fantasy) that the energy of that current of subjectivity is sublimated an does not harm the integrity of primary identity.

Fridolin's confession to Albertine and her response, which validates his experiences within the compact of their discursive community, restores the harmony of their relationship. Ultimately, it is Albertine, the more psychologically integrated of the two, who recognizes that there are potential realities that are never expressed, even within the entire course of a lifetime, but that nevertheless form a part of a greater truth – the sum of who a person is, their experiences of self and of the world – in short, their subjectivity:

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[154] "Undoubtedly Albertina, after making this find, suspected something – presumably, more and worse things than had actually happened. And she intimated this by placing the mask on the pillow beside her, as though it signified his face, the face of her husband who had become an enigma to her. This playful, almost joking action seemed to express both a gentle warning and her readiness to forgive. Fridolin confidently hoped that, remembering her own dream, she would not be inclined to take his too seriously, no matter what might have happened" (141).

> Sie lächelte, und nach kurzem Zögern erwiderte sie: "Dem Schickal dankbar sein, glaube ich, daß wir aus allen Abenteuern heil davongekommen sind – aus den wirklichen und aus dem geträumten."
>
> "Weißt du das ganz gewiß?" fragte er.
>
> "So gewiß, als ich ahne, daß die Wirklichkeit einer Nacht, ja daß nicht einmal die eines ganzen Menschenlebens zugleich auch seine innerste Wahrheit bedeutet."
>
> "Und kein Traum," seufzte er leise, "ist völlig Traum."
>
> Sie nahm seinen Kopf in beide Hände und bettete ihn innig an ihre Brust. "Nun sind wir wohl erwacht," sagte sie – "für lange."
>
> (103)[155]

The novella ends with the dawning of a day that, unlike the grey awakening of the first morning after the *Redout*, is filled with the victorious light of renewal, the restoration of familial harmony, and resolution of traumatic crisis:

> So lagen sie beide schweigend, beide wohl auch ein wenig schlummernd und einander traumlos nah – bis es wie jeden Morgen um sieben Uhr an die Zimmertür klopfte, und, mit den

[155] "She smiled, and after a minute, replied: 'I think we ought to be grateful that we have come unharmed out of all our adventures, whether they were real or only a dream.'

'Are you quite sure of that?' he asked.

'Just as sure as I am that the reality of one night, let alone that of a whole lifetime, is not the whole truth.'

'And no dream,' he sad with a slight sigh, 'is entirely a dream.'

She took his head and pillowed it on her breast. 'Now I suppose we are awake,' she said – 'for a long time to come'" (143).

gewohnten Geräuschen von der Straße her, einem sieghaften Lichtstrahl durch den Vorhangspalt und einem hellen Kinderlachen von nebenan der Tag begann. (103)[156]

Traumnovelle, which ends with the resolution of Fridolin's traumatic crisis, is a narrative that represents the individual experience of such crisis. Focused almost in its entirety on the inner perceptions and attitudes of its protagonist, that narrative deals with trauma that is not immediately shared by others. Fridolin's crisis is precipitated by a minor event however it is caused by a constellation of circumstances including his dissatisfaction with prior life choices, insecurity in his relationship with Albertine, and the inexorable process of aging. The novella gives us a view into how the structure of the organizational domains and the behavior of the semiotic current can act as the etiology of trauma. In its focus on a crisis that cannot be attributed to a "traumatic event," it is possible to move beyond the stubborn assumption that trauma can be defined as a response to a specific kind of event.

In chapters four and five of this study, I will examine a narrative that does focus on an event traditionally recognized as "traumatic." Russell Banks's *The Sweet Hereafter* depicts the effects that a deadly school bus accident has on the residents of a small town in upstate New York. This narrative will allow a closer look at the way in which an event that finds broad-scale acceptance as being "traumatic" nonetheless precipitates a unique crisis in each individual depending upon their past experiences, their relationship to the

[156] "So they lay silently, dozing a little, dreamlessly, close to one another – until, as on every morning at seven, there was a knock on the door; and, with the usual noises from the street, a victorious ray of light through the opening of the curtain, and the clear laughter of a child through the door, the new day began" (143).

event, etc. The structure of the organizational domains and the resulting behavior of the current of subjectivity in each of the individuals determine both the manner of crisis they experience, and the kind of resolution that each seeks. In addition, the narrative's focus on the entire community will permit a closer examination of the shared, social response to trauma, as well as the opposition and differing agendas of both social and individual trauma.

Chapter 4: Russell Banks's *The Sweet Hereafter*: Individual Reactions to a Shared Event

> [The Gardner edition of John Donne] reads: 'And death shall be no more, comma, death thou shalt die.' Nothing but a breath, a comma, separates life from life everlasting. Very simple, really. With the original punctuation, death is no longer something to act out on a stage with exclamation marks. It is a comma, a pause. […] Life, death; soul, God; past, present – not insuperable barriers. Not semicolons. Just a comma.[1]

4.0 Introduction

In the preceding chapter, I examined Schnitzler's *Traumnovelle*, a narrative that deals with a traumatic crisis that is purely internal to the person experiencing it. There is no event that we can point to as being "catastrophic" or traumatic in the sense posited by traditional trauma theory. Rather, the narrative's primary character, Fridolin, suffers a crisis that is precipitated by what might even be considered a "non-event." While attending a masked ball with his wife, Albertine, the couple's subtle pretension that they belong to a higher social standing is rejected by the masquerade's other participants – a rejection of subjective identity in the Communicative domain that proves to be problematic for Fridolin in particular. There is no quality inherent in this experience that makes it traumatic, and it certainly would not be included on the restricted list of events that traditional trauma theory considers to be "traumatic events." When this instance of social rejection is added to unaccommodated experience that has already been kindling,

[1] *Wit*, dir. Mike Nichols, perf. Ema Thompson, Christopher Loyde, Eileen Atkins, and Audra McDonalds, 2001, DVD, HBO Studios, 2001.

not yet possessing the force needed to create an overflow of the semiotic current, however, a critical mass is reached and traumatic crisis occurs.

The form that this crisis takes is determined by the structure of the organizational domains and the behavior of the semiotic current in Fridolin alone. His wife, Albertine, who likewise suffers a narcissistic injury at that ball, is able to deal with this rejection and the resulting overflow of the semiotic current by accommodating it in a dream – a use of a Narrative domain that enables her to *sublimate* the energy of diverted subjectivity (overflow). In Fridolin's case, the influx of diverted subjectivity into a Narrative domain (fantasy) temporarily disrupts the natural asymmetry that subordinates a Narrative domain to Idiolect, allowing that Narrative to compete with Idiolect as Fridolin's primary apprehension of symbolized meaning – e.g. "reality." Fridolin's perceptions of "reality" and of identity fluctuate as he struggles to accommodate changes brought about by the gradual process of aging. Aspects of identity that have slowly become increasingly untenable are less and less able to assert their legitimacy and are in danger of permanent foreclosure. This crisis, specifically mid-life crisis, can only be shared with others with great difficulty. It does not demand that dramatically heterogeneous experience be accommodated within the Communicative domain. Rather, it requires Fridolin to reconstitute his identity within a more or less intact apprehension of symbolized meaning.

Traumnovelle allows us to see how traumatic crisis arises idiosyncratically, based solely upon the structure of the individual's organizational domains and the behavior of her own current of subjectivity – in other words, the delineation of Self from Other, the constitution of a subject in the symbolic terms of Idiolect, et cetera. Those organizational

domains and the resulting behavior of the semiotic current (the current of subjectivity), in turn, have themselves been shaped by the individual's own past experiences, as well as by the discursive communities to which they belong. Those discursive communities establish the Communicative domain, which acts as a constraint upon the way an individual may modify their apprehension of symbolized meaning (Idiolect). As none of the organizational domains are truly shared among individuals, traumatic crisis always arises idiosyncratically. It is not, however, *idiopathic*. Although there is a temporary disruption in Fridolin's identity and a disorganization of what are represented as his "cognitive processes" – disruptions that could potentially be viewed and treated as pathology – the traumatic crisis that arises does not truly reflect a breakdown of either meaning or subjectivity. It is, instead, a part of a naturally occurring process by which the individual comes to terms with incompatibilities among the organizational domains (Epistemic, Ethical, Idiolectic, Narrative, and Communicative) as both meaning and identity are redefined.

Individual traumatic crisis provides the impetus (*Leidensdruck*) either to challenge shared signification and demand the accommodation of heterogeneous signification prompted by individual experience in the Communicative domain, or (as in Fridolin's case), it provides the impetus to modify one's own organizational domains so that they better correlate the perception of one's own identity with the social reception of that identity. Collective, social trauma deals with the fragmentation of social identity (identity shared by members of a discursive community). As we will see, social trauma generates the resistance to heterogeneous experience presented by the individual, thereby

preserving social identity and the basis for mutual communication (shared signification). Traumatic crisis arises in the intersection of competing traumatic processes, and the impetus generated by both individual and collective trauma enables the renegotiation of shared signification on a large scale.

The narrative that I will examine in the last two chapters of this study is Russell Banks's novel, *The Sweet Hereafter*, and to a lesser extent the filmic adaptation of the novel by Atom Egoyan of the same name.[2] There is not an extensive body of secondary literature that deals with *The Sweet Hereafter*, and much of that which exists tends to focus specifically on the film. The majority of what can be found in print consists of book reviews that touch on the principle characteristics of the novel (i.e., its unique narrative structure, its treatment of the way in which "truth" is constructed) without offering any in-depth analysis. Perhaps the most all-encompassing examination of Russell Banks and his work is presented in Robert Niemi's *Russell Banks*.[3] That study, which provides a finely executed, twenty-eight page biography of Banks, also offers a brief examination of each of his works, including *The Sweet Hereafter*.

Niemi approaches the novel as a representing what he calls "a Polyphonic Novel with the Community as Hero" (Niemi 161). The synopsis that he provides examines the organization of the narrative into five discrete sections (presented by four different characters), and places the novel's treatment of the town's social fabric within the context of Banks's body of work, especially *Affliction*, and *Rule of the Bone*. Together, these

[2] Russell Banks, *The Sweet Hereafter* (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 1991). *The Sweet Hereafter,* dir. Atom Egoyan, perf. Ian Holm, Caerthan Banks, Sarah Polley, and Tom McCamus, 1997, DVD, New Line Home Video, 1998.
[3] Robert Niemi, *Russell Banks* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1997).

three novels form what Niemi calls Banks's "most comprehensive and cogent treatment of working-class life in the Northeast" (Niemi 149), a theme that Niemi focuses on throughout his examination of Banks's work as a whole. At the same time, his analysis of the novel's characters and their individual crises is reductive. Niemi seems to view each character as an embodiment of a unified narrative function and faced with a single crisis, while ignoring dramatic ambiguities in the narratives given by each character.

We find a more differentiated treatment of the narrative and its characters in an essay by Austin Sarat, who published a lengthy analysis of the filmic adaptation of the narrative and its representation of both the law, and the role of the father. That analysis, "Imagining the Law of the Father: Loss, Dread, and Mourning in 'The Sweet hereafter,'" reflects the interest that the film that has engendered among those who study law, and in particular, the dubious nature of ethics in the practice of law.[4] In this, Sarat's essay is not only one of the most well thought-out analyses of the narrative (whether novel or film); it is also representative of one of the most robust discourses to have arisen surrounding that narrative. Sarat's analysis draws on the fields of psychoanalysis, gender studies, and film studies to expose the mythologized and mythologizing figure of the father as a metaphor for the law. The article represents Sarat's efforts to move beyond the study of the law in deeds and the printed word, and to initiate the study of "law of the image" (Sarat 3).

Another somewhat lengthy treatment of the film can be found in Kathleen Weese's article: "Family Stories: Gender and Discourse in Atom Egoyan's *The Sweet*

[4] Austin Sarat, "Imagining the Law of the Father: Loss, Dread, and Mourning in 'The Sweet Hereafter,'" *Law & Society Review* 34.1 (2000): 3-46. Sarat himself taught the film in a course entitled "The Social Organization of Law" at Amherst College in the Fall semester, 2004. See "The Social Organization of Law," *Political Science at Amherst College*. 2004. Amherst College, Amherst Massachusetts. 12 April, 2005. <http://www.amherst.edu/~polisci/ps18syllabus.htm>.

Hereafter."[5] Like Sarat's article, Weese's treatment of the narrative is unique in the level of detail it achieves, and is representative of a modernist approach that focuses on the objectification of women in the cinematic gaze. In that essay, Weese presents a modernist, feminist reading that draws to a large extent on Kaja Silverman's *The Acoustic Mirror: The Female Voice in Psychoanalysis and Cinema*, and to some degree on Lacanian semiotic theory.[6] This reading is, at times, forced, however Weese's treatment of Nichole Burnell's relationship with her father and to the lawyer, Mitchell Stephens, is detailed, and captures the fragmentation of Nichole's identity, as well as her discovery of what Weese calls her "discursive agency" (Weese 75). The primary focus of the essay, however, is on the relationship between gender and filmic narrative, and what Weese sees as the film's unique "feminist vision" (Weese 71).

Russell Banks's own statements about his work to interviewers provides perhaps the greatest insight into the novel, which is but a part of what Banks acknowledges is a lifelong re-examination of trauma that reveals itself in his writing. Banks described the relationship of his own traumatic experiences to his work in these terms: "I can see my life as a kind of obsessive return to the 'wound' […] Going back again and again trying to get it right, trying to figure out how it happened and who is to blame and who is to forgive" (Brown 68). A number of Banks's works deal specifically with trauma and the disruption created by traumatic experiences however *The Sweet Hereafter* presents the reader with the most extensive treatment of the way in which traumatic events can affect

[5] Katherine Weese, "Family Stories: Gender and Discourse in Atom Egoyan's *The Sweet Hereafter*," *Narrative* 10.1 (2002): 69-85.
[6] Kaja Silverman, *The Acoustic Mirror: The Female Voice in Psychoanalysis and Cinema* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988).

an entire community in a collective manner. As Banks told a reviewer for the *New York Times*, he wrote the novel "to explore how a community is both disrupted and unified by a tragedy" (Nicholls 29). The community takes the foreground as a character unto itself, as I will show in the fifth chapter of this study, and this is precisely as Banks himself conceived of the narrative: "I wanted to write a novel in which the community was the hero, rather than any single individual. I wanted to explore how a community is both disrupted and unified by a tragedy" (Nicholls 29).

Like *Traumnovelle*, *The Sweet Hereafter* presents us with a narrative that depicts traumatic crisis. Unlike *Traumnovelle*, however, Banks's novel depicts several parallel crises, each precipitated by a single event that would be considered "legitimately" traumatic in traditional trauma theory. Like the snub at the masquerade in *Traumnovelle,* however, the event around which *The Sweet Hereafter* is constructed – a school bus crash in which fourteen children die – can also not be considered in and of itself definitive of trauma, but is merely a precipitator of traumatic crisis. The nature of the traumatic crisis in each individual (indeed, whether such a crisis develops at all) is determined by the existing structure of the individual's organizational domains, as well as by their innate capacity to accommodate change. While the school bus accident will figure in the testimony of each character, in every instance the disruption to the current of subjectivity will be determined by the innate vulnerabilities of the individual herself – in particular traumata (unaccommodated or conflicted current) that occurred earlier in life, but that have remained unresolved.

The crash and resulting death of the children differs from the precipitating experience in *Traumnovelle* in that it represents an experience that calls for the *abrupt* reorganization of Idiolect and other organizational domains. Unlike Fridolin's crisis in the preceding chapter, there are no symbolized structures to accommodate that experience. The nature of any current and the channel that contains it, is such that these are better suited to gradual change. An abrupt influx of heterogeneous experience will much more reliably cause the overflow of the semiotic current (traumatic crisis) and as a result, inquiry into trauma has focused on the *event* as the etiology of crisis. A demand for the dramatic revision of the organizational domains is very different from the slow kindling of unaccommodated experience and eventual overflow represented in *Traumnovelle*, in which the gradually building discordance between Fridolin's perception of his identity and the public perception of his identity eventually builds to a crisis.

The accident depicted in *The Sweet Hereafter* generates the kinds of experience (i.e. the death of one's child) that are more universally excluded from the structures that shape the current of subjectivity, and are therefore much more likely to demand a radical reorganization of those domains. The broader the traumatic effect, the more likely that an event will be viewed as legitimately traumatizing, although the number of people who are perceived to be similarly affected should not be used to determine the "validity" of an experience of traumatic crisis. This increased likelihood of precipitating a traumatic crisis notwithstanding, the event does not define the experience of the individual who is affected. The novel presents the experience of the school bus driver – Dolores Driscoll, the father of two of the children who die – Billy Ansel, a lawyer from out-of-town who

arrives to represent the families – Mitchell Stephens, and the most severely injured child to survive the accident – Nicole Burnell. In each of these four individuals, that single event will produce a crisis that is wholly unique to each, based upon the vulnerabilities inherent in his or her organizational domains.

The Sweet Hereafter not only provides us with an account of four individual traumatic crisis that arise in response to a single event, it also offers and account of collective (shared, social) trauma. Each of the novel's four principal characters is given a chapter in which to present his or her individual account of events surrounding the tragedy – perceptions of the accident and his or her relationship to it. The fifth and final chapter is a continuation of the testimony by the bus driver, Dolores Driscoll, who began that account in the novel's first chapter. In that final chapter Dolores speaks not only of the resolution of her own individual traumatic crisis, but of the crisis of a fifth character as well; the town of Sam Dent. At that point, the narrative provides the reader with an interpolation of collective trauma by addressing both the effects of the accident on the town, and the town's mobilization to restore social cohesion and social identity in its wake. By providing a testimony that speaks for the town itself (placed in the mouth of Dolores Driscoll, whose name itself etymologically means "interpreter of sorrows"), the close interrelation of the individual traumatic process and the collective traumatic process becomes apparent.

The final chapters of this study will deal with Banks's novel. In this (the fourth) chapter, I will present the first two of five accounts that comprise the narrative – that of the school bus driver, Dolores Driscoll, and that of Billy Ansel, the father of two children

who die in the accident. My focus in this chapter will be on the unique response to a single event by each individual, as well as the role that prior experience plays in shaping traumatic crisis. In the final chapter of this study, I will present the remaining accounts: those of the lawyer, Mitchell Stephens; Nichole Burnell, an eighth grader who survived the accident; as well as a second account by Dolores Driscoll in which we learn both of her own resolution to crisis, and that of the town. This division onto two separate chapters is useful, since my analysis in each chapter will focus on entirely different aspects. In chapter four, I will be primarily interested in contrasting the experiences of distinct individuals to a shared event. In chapter five, I will examine the differing agendas of the individual and the social (i.e., collective) responses to traumatic experience. By carefully examining both the way in which guilt and innocence are manipulated, and the way in which meaning is ultimately reestablished, I will demonstrate how the negotiation of personal identity within a community functions to resolve the fragmentation of that community. Through this careful examination of how the individual and her community interact in the wake of traumatic experience, it will become clear how "truth" is constructed at both an individual and a social level in order to preserve the functioning and integrity of the individual and society.

4.1 Dolores Driscoll: Embedded Trauma

The Sweet Hereafter is set in the dead of winter in Sam Dent, a fictitious small town in upstate New York. The town's inhabitants form a closed, tight-knit community that regards anyone as an outsider who was not born and raised in the town, regardless of

how long such an "outsider" might have lived there. This tightly woven social structure of the town helps the reader to appreciate the degree to which the inhabitants' identity is tied to the town itself, both in terms of their sense of belonging, and in terms of the way in which their identity is drawn from their role in that community. Only one of the novel's primary characters, the lawyer, Mitchell Stephens, comes from outside of this community. With the exception of the "summer people" – wealthy outsiders who either own or rent vacation homes in the area, and who remain largely unknown to most of the town's full-time residents – very few people ever stop in Sam Dent. As the school bus driver, Dolores Driscoll describes it:

> Sam Dent is one of those towns that's on the way to somewhere else, and people get this far, they usually keep going. (21)

The closed nature of the town's community means that the notion of connection and the loss of connection to the community are vital to the narrative. While the traumatic reaction of each of the primary characters to the fatal school bus accident is unique, those reactions can never be separated from the trauma of the town as a whole – a collective trauma.

The importance of connection, and the traumatic crisis that arises when essential human and social connections are lost figure, centrally in the first "testimony" – that of Dolores Driscoll in chapter one of the novel. Like each of the novel's chapters, chapter one consists of a first person narrative that reflects the *conscious* thoughts, feelings and perceptions of a single character without authorial interjection or interpolation. Dolores is a native of the town where she is not only the school bus driver, but where she also works

part time in the post office and as a mail carrier. The nature of her work places her in a unique position to provide a broad sketch of the town's residents, many of whom she introduces and briefly characterizes for the reader over the course of her account. Indeed, her focus on these characterizations makes it clear to the reader that human and social connection and most importantly, its loss is an essential concern for Dolores.

The employment that Dolores has sought out which, by its very nature, brings her into contact with virtually the entire community makes the importance of social contact apparent at the most obvious level. Her familiarity with even the "summer people" and the newcomers is a point of pride for her, but also demonstrates a certain degree of sensitivity towards those who are otherwise marginalized by the community:

> I've spent my whole life in this town, and I can safely say I know everyone in it, even the newcomers, even the summer people. Well, not all the summer people; just the regulars, who own their own houses and arrive early and leave late. Them I know because when school's out I work part time their sorting mail in the post office and helping Eden Schraft deliver it. That is, I used to, before the accident. Now I work in Lake Placid, driving for the hotels. (7-8)

Dolores's work is not merely a way to get by financially. Her jobs as school bus driver, postal worker, and as mail carrier make her an integral part of the community, providing services that benefit a majority of the population and that therefore give her much satisfaction. Driving the school bus in particular affords her great pleasure on a personal

level, providing an adequate expression for what she characterizes as a "sanguine personality:"

> It's almost impossible to say how important and pleasurable that job was to me. Though I liked being at home with Abbott and had the post office and mail carrier job to get me through the summers, I could hardly wait till school started again in September and I could get back out there in early morning light and start up my bus and commence to gather the children of the town and carry them to school. I have what you call a sanguine personality. That's what Abbott calls it. (23)

Her sense of connection and her enjoyment of human contact brings with it a shadowy counterpart – a sense of disconnection and a fear of exclusion. In essence, this desire for connection and its antithesis, the suffering brought about by the loss of connection form the core of Dolores's traumatic crisis, establishing a point of vulnerability in her subjective identity that both drives her actions, and shapes her interpretation of events as they transpire. The school bus accident, which led to the death of fourteen children in her care, certainly is the *precipitator* of traumatic crisis. The traumatic crisis that arises, however, is shaped entirely by the vulnerabilities that already existed in Dolores's current of subjectivity including her need for connection, and her painful awareness of connection that is lost or missing. Interestingly enough, Dolores devotes little time in her testimony to the accident itself or the events that lead up to it. Rather, her narrative focuses with enormous detail both on her feelings about the "people

of her town," and in particular, her relationship both with the children on the bus and with her own children.

Although Dolores is familiar with nearly everyone in town, her relationships with adults in the town do not figure in her testimony with the sole exception of her relationship with her husband, Abbott, and her two grown sons. This relationship with Abbott is itself uniquely limited. Abbott suffered a stroke several years prior, and as a result, he is housebound and confined to a wheelchair. In addition, Abbott's ability to communicate is profoundly affected and his speech has been rendered incomprehensible, or very nearly so. Dolores, however, claims to understand his speech, and her account is peppered with references to things that Abbott has said or with characterizations he has made:

> Abbott was at one time an excellent carpenter, but in 1984 he had a stroke, and although he has recovered somewhat, he's still pretty much housebound and has trouble talking normally and according to some people is incomprehensible, yet I myself understand him perfectly. No doubt because I know that his mind is clear. (3)

Dolores ability to understand Abbott's speech, or at least to understand *meaningful* speech is highly questionable. A verbatim rendering of what Abbott says is only given twice in the chapter, and in both instances, the content is devoid of any significant meaning. One of those examples includes a rather nonsensical observation on the weather, and Dolores's equally arcane validation of its significance:

> "North…Pole's…under…snow," he said.

No arguing with that. (4)

Abbott's ability to produce meaningful speech is judged differently by other characters in the novel. In a later chapter of the novel, Mitchell Stephens, the slick lawyer from New York City, offers his assessment both of Abbott's speech and of Dolores's claim that she can "understand" what he says. He observes that Abbott's speech is indeed unintelligible both in its phonetic rendering and in its content. In Dolores's ability to interpret not only the phonetic sounds Abbott produces, but also the content, which is as brief and as obscure as "a Delphic pronouncement," Mitchell Stephens sees her unrealistic desire to understand him and her desire to communicate with him:

> Although he [Abbott] seemed bright enough, his speech was seriously impaired, and I could make out only about half of what he said. Most of the other half Dolores translated, whether I wanted her to or not. He spoke in these odd cryptic sentences that didn't really mean a whole lot to me but to Dolores were like Delphic pronouncements. I guess she loved the hell out of the guy and heard what she wanted to hear. (149)

The most striking contrast between what Abbot articulates and Dolores interprets occurs in a critical scene later in the novel, in which Mitchell Stephens attempts to pressure Dolores into testifying against either the school board or the bus manufacturer (whoever has the "deepest pockets") in an injury suit. Responding to Mitchell Stephens's increasingly sharp tone, Abbott erupts into an inarticulate roar, rendered by Mitchell Stephens as follows:

> Then Abbott spoke. He twisted his face around his mouth as best he could and pursed his lips on the left side as though he were sucking a straw and in a loud voice said something like "A down… gloobity-gear…and day old'll… find you… innocent… if a brudder… lands… gloobity first…" (150-151)

Dolores "translates" the garbled sounds he makes with the lengthy text that pointedly, almost poetically sums up her own reasons for not participating in the class action suit:

> "What Abbot said was: The true jury of a person's peers is the people of her town. Only they, the people who have known her all her life, and not twelve strangers, can decide her guilt or innocence. And if Dolores – meaning me, of course – if she has committed a crime, then it's a crime against them, not the state, so they are the ones who must decide her punishment too. What Abbott is saying, Mr. Stephens, is forget the lawsuit. That's what he's saying." (151)

Ultimately, Mitchell Stephens concludes that, like a ventriloquist and her dummy, Dolores puts her own words into Abbott's mouth while at the same time distancing herself from them by attributing authorship to Abbott:

> "Yep. I told you he was logical," she declared. "He understands things better than most people. He understands me too."
>
> "That right?"

"Oh, yes. Abbott's a genius."

A genius, eh? A gibbering fool, is what I thought. From what I could see and hear, Dolores was the ventriloquist and Abbott the dummy. And you can't argue with the ventriloquist about what the dummy really said. (151-152)

However comprehensible or incomprehensible Abbott may be, we hear most of what he has to say through Dolores herself, who often "quotes" him as a way of providing a pithy summation of her own more sweeping, garrulous discourse. She concludes the description of how much she loved her job (cited above), for instance, with Abbott's rather pointed summation that she quite simply has a "sanguine personality" (23) – i.e. she is outgoing and enjoys contact with people. It is as though she relies on Abbott to make her own perceptions and feelings comprehensible, making him the embodiment of transcendent or occult knowledge:

> Me, I'm a talker, and consequently like a lot talkers tend to say things I don't mean. But Abbott, more than anyone else I know, has to make his words count, almost like a poet, and because he's passed so close to death he has a clarity about life that most of us can't imagine." (3)

While she claims that Abbott possesses extraordinary clarity and wisdom, the fact remains that Abbott's communication is both phonologically incomprehensible and by and large substantially meaningless. Consequently, the succinct and incisive observations with which Dolores often brings her loquacious descriptions to a close in truth come from

Dolores herself. Her "interpretations" of Abbott's essentially incomprehensible utterances provides her with a second locus of speech, thereby allowing her to articulate her own subjectivity in contrasted, eve conflicted ways.

In terms of the Dolores's use of Abbott's voice, Abbott stands in for the part of Dolores that is more reserved, insular, and even profound. The reserved and concentrated quality of that speech contrasts sharply with the more social and garrulous nature of her own primary identity. Dolores's projection of her own speech into Abbott serves as a way to hold diverted subjectivity. Interestingly, Dolores attributes Abbott's greater self-containment and the precise and insightful quality of his speech more to his experience of trauma than to motor difficulties that make speaking an effort. That clarity, in her opinion, reflects a wisdom derived from having "passed so close to death", or in other words, from his own traumatic experience. This observation presages the change that we will observe in Dolores herself in the final (fifth) chapter of the novel when not only will her discourse permanently take on the qualities attributed to Abbott's speech (profound, precise, clear), but she will also find a self-containment and self-sufficiency that will allow her to leave Sam Dent and her connections there. (I will return to this transformation in Dolores in the final chapter of this study.)

Abbott's impediment, created by his stroke, disrupts his relationship with Dolores. That relationship, we discover in the novel's final chapter, had been particularly close and all-consuming, to the detriment of other significant relationships – even those with her sons. As a result, Dolores's difficulty in communicating with Abbott constitutes a significant loss and experience of disconnection. That relationship is not the only one in

which she suffers from a feeling of disconnection however. Her relationship with her now adult sons – the only other adult relationships of which she speaks – is also problematic and plagued by an experience of distance or even of loss. In the case of her younger son, William, she attributes that distance to his recent experiences in combat – a disruption of connection brought about by his presumably traumatic experience. In the case of Reginald, she senses a disdain for what she believes he sees as her diminished intellectual capacity:

> William, who is the younger, is in the army in Virginia and was just back from Panama then, and although he had not been wounded or anything, he was sounding a little strange and distant to me, which is understandable, I suppose. […] Reginald was having some marital problems, you might say, in that his wife, Tracy, was bored with her job at the Plattsburgh Marriott, where she worked as a receptionist, and wanted to get pregnant. […] I told him why didn't he tell Tracy to find a job that wasn't boring. That irritated him. […] "Ma, it's not that *simple,*" he said, as if he thought I was simpleminded. (8)

Dolores brings up this sense of disconnection and distance from her sons a number of times throughout her account as an explanation for a variety of her actions on the day of the accident, acknowledging that it had contributed to her level of distraction, excitability, as well as to her sometimes conflicted interactions with some of the children on her bus. I will return to her these points as they arise in the chapter.

These three primary relationships in Dolores's life – that is, with her sins and with Abbott – have always been fraught with difficulties in terms if the adequacy of the connection that Dolores feels. This is particularly true of her relationship with Abbott, which the reader learns has been all-consuming in its intensity, but punctuated by Abbott's punitive withdrawal of connection in the form of language. Abbott used his taciturn nature as a means of controlling Dolores and her sons, and some of her garrulous tendencies were developed as a means of placating Abbott:

> Abbott didn't say anything. When he chooses his gaze alone makes a powerful statement. Without a word, just by sitting there and putting on a hard look, he can set me or Reginald or William to jabbering elaborate apologies and explanations, until finally he smiles and we can stop. Sometimes I think that's why Reginald moved to Platsburgh and William joined the army, just to get away from their father's gaze. For privacy. Me, of course, I never really thought I needed that kind of privacy. (243)

Abbott's imperious behavior and Dolores's efforts to placate him demonstrates a dramatic imbalance of power in the relationship and that imbalance resembles an adult-child relationship in certain ways. (Indeed, 'Abbott' means 'father.') Abbott's sparing use of language, the power in his withdrawal of language, and the authority of his pronouncements has a profound impact on Dolores's sense of security. Even after his stroke and the impediment of his speech, Dolores continues to interject Abbott's authoritative pronouncements as punctuation to her own more rambling discursive style.

In so doing, she maintains the inequitable relationship that had historically been theirs, and she usurps the voice by placing her own more succinct thoughts in Abbott's mouth.

Dolores's relationship with the adult members of her town is superficial, but generally friendly, however Dolores's significant adult relationships are conflicted. She appears to feel much more relaxed and competent in the presence of children, where she can establish the rules and command a certain degree of respect simply by virtue of her position as the adult responsible for their care. Dolores finds a manifestation of her conflicted relationship with Abbott and her sons in her relationships with the various children who ride her bus, as well as a means for compensating for its failings in those significant relationships. Just as Dolores projects a conflicted (and desired) aspect of her own subjectivity onto Abbott, Dolores find a distinct manifestation for aspects of her conflicted feelings about her sons in her relationships with specific children on the bus. Those different relationships are explored over the course of her account as she picks up the children at their various stops along the bus route.

The first children on her route, the three Lamston children, make the connection between the children on the bus route with her sons in particular her conflict with her sons readily apparent. The arrival of the Lamstons segues seamlessly with her rumination on that conflict, appearing at first almost as though it were her sons who had just arrived at the bus doors, rather than the Lamstons:

> Anyhow, I was feeling cut off from my sons, which is unusual and gives me an empty feeling in the stomach when it happens, almost

> like a hunger, and I wanted to do something to change it, but nothing would come to my mind.
>
> Then suddenly they were there, the Lamstons, the two older boys, Harold and Jesse, banging on the door, and the little girl, Sheila […]. (9)

Dolores's conflict with the Lamston children correlates precisely with the conflict that she experiences with her sons (disconnection), but also with Abbott (punitive silence). The children are taciturn, and she is unable to establish contact with them or to develop the warm bond she desires:

> I never exactly liked the Lamston kids; they made it hard. But I felt sorry for them, so instead I acted as if I was very fond of them. They were what you call uncommunicative, all three, although they certainly communicated fine with one another, always whispering back and forth in a way that made you think they were criticizing you. (9)

The Lamstons' refusal to reciprocate Dolores's gestures and overtures provoke a range of responses from Dolores. Emotionally, these run the gamut, including a vague dislike of them, compensatory friendliness, open hostility, empathy with them, to disgust with her own exaggerated efforts to illicit a response from them:

> Little, pinch-faced kids, a solemn trio they were, commiserating with one another in whispers behind my back while I drove and every now and then tried to chat them up. "How you this morning?

> All ready to read 'n' write 'n' 'rithmatic?" That sort of thing. Make myself sick. "Pretty damned cold this morning coming down the hill, I bet." Nothing. Silence. (10)

Dolores's efforts to engage the Lamstons closely resemble the loquacious manner with which Dolores and her sons attempted to appease Abbott when he disciplined them with his stony silence. In those efforts, we can begin to see how some degree of Dolores's "sanguinity" represents less a feeling of underlying warmth towards people, and more a compensatory mechanism – a way of warding off rejection and a feeling of exclusion. That compensatory mechanism is not entirely unconscious. Even as her interactions with the Lamstons betrays her vulnerability – a vulnerability that drives her actions in ways of which she herself does not approve – she is simultaneously aware that he behavior is false and that the Lamston children have their own, personal reasons for being self-contained and for shrinking from contact:

> […] the Lamstons were a family that, after a good start, had come to be characterized by permanent overall failure, and people generally shunned them for it. In return, they withheld themselves. It was their only point of pride, I suppose. Which is why the children behaved so sadly aloof, even to me. And who could begrudge them?" (11)

Dolores is divided in her perceptions of the Lamstons, fluctuating between a paranoid sense that the Lamstons' silence and distance from her indicates a hostile and very personal form of rejection, and a more grounded sense that their withdrawal has to do

with their own difficulties and sense of social exclusion. This division in her perceptions and, ultimately, in her behavior and sense of self, mimics the division of Dolores's speech into a loquacious voice that strives for intensified contact with others, and the sparse but incisive speech she falsely attributes to Abbott as the embodiment of her desire for greater self-containment.

Unable to tolerate silence, which literally 'signifies' disconnection, Dolores is eventually driven to push the Lamston children into a response by goading them to anger. That hostile impulse betrays a dark side to Dolores's "talkativeness" or "outgoingness" in which language becomes as coercive a tool as silence. Not only is her drive to be in contact with others – in particular with children – a compensatory mechanism that enables her to manage her fear of disconnection, it is a potential weapon. It is easier for Dolores to be with children than to be with adults in the sense that she can control the relationship, define the terms under which contact is to be established and maintained, and even demand contact when it is withheld:

> Most days I just ignored them, left them to themselves, since that's clearly what they wanted, and whistled my way down the hill to the second stop, treating it in my mind like it was my first stop coming up and not the second and I was still alone in the bus. But that day for some reason I wanted to get a rise out of at least one of the three. Maybe because I felt so cut off from my own children; maybe out of some pure perversity. Who knows now? Fixing

> motives is like fixing blame – the further away from the act you get, the harder it is to single out one thing as having caused it. (10)

Dolores's efforts to bully a response is as much desperation as it is hostility. As her efforts become more desperate, however, they eventually lead to a more overt expression of rejection that, unlike the children's earlier silence, truly represents a rejection of Dolores herself:

> "Harold!" I said. "You hear me ask you a question?" I turned around and cut him a look.
>
> "Leave us alone!" he said, coming right back at me with those cold blue eyes of his. His brother, Jesse, sat by the window, looking out as if he could see into the dark. Harold was trying to wipe his baby sister's red face with the end of his scarf. She had been crying in that silent way of a very sad and frightened person, and I suddenly felt terrible and wished I had kept my big mouth shut. (12)

Dolores's relationship with the Lamstons shows us the conflicted nature of her need for contact – the compensatory nature of her outgoing behavior, the productive as well as the destructive potential in her behavior, and the fluctuation between self-condemnation and condemnation of those with whom Dolores experiences a diminished connection. Underlying all of this is a self-contained, taciturn, less needy self that she projects onto Abbott as profoundly admirable but as foreign to her – diverted subjectivity from which she has essentially become disconnected. Not all of Dolores's relationships

with the children on her bus are this conflicted, however, and her relationship with various children on the bus differs, articulating different aspects of her subjective identity. The connection that Dolores seeks out with the children as a means of establishing a sense of belonging functions, in many ways, productively. She is invested both in personalizing those relationships, and in ensuring the active participation (interpersonal connection) of all of the children in her care:

> The bus I had given the name Shoe to, which is just something I do, because the kinds seemed to like it when they could personalize the thing. I think it made going to school a little more pleasurable for them, especially the younger children, some of whose home lives were not exactly sweetness and light, if you know what I mean. […] By staying away from the cutesy names, sticking with names that were slightly humorous, I was able to get the older kids to go along with the game, making the ride more cheerful for everyone that way. It was something we could all participate in together, which was a value I tried to promote among young people. (5-6)

There is a degree of safety in interacting with children as opposed to interacting with adults, over whom Dolores cannot exercise the same control. Dolores idealizes childhood as a time in which all of the various manifestations of social interaction are represented, but in which nothing is hidden and from which, no permanent harm can occur. Unlike adult interactions, the consequences of children's interactions are

temporary. Children's use of language – their questions, arguing, gossiping, bragging, etc. – is just another kind of play through which they practice for the "real" use of language later and hence, Dolores claims that children's language is non-threatening:

> By now there was some noise in the bus, the early morning sounds of children practicing at being adults, making themselves known to one another and to themselves in their small voices (some of them not so small) – asking questions, arguing, making exchanges, gossiping, bragging, pleading, courting, threatening, testing – doing everything we ourselves do, the way puppies and kittens at play mimic grown dogs and cats at work. It's not altogether peaceful or sweet, but it doesn't do any serious harm. And because you can listen to children without fear, the way you can watch puppies tumble and bite and kittens sneak up on one another and spring without worrying that they'll be hurt by it, the talk of children can be very instructive. I guess it's because they play openly at what we grownups do seriously and in secret. (16-17)

Dolores feels safe and, just as importantly, she feels competent and connected when she is with children. Being present as the only adult allows Dolores to feel *competent* in her care of them, but also allows her to feel that she is a part of their discursive community. Driving her school bus, Dolores can allow herself to return, mentally, to what she imagines childhood to have been like, thereby experiencing an even stronger sense of belonging with the children on the bus and at the same time, bringing together opposing

expressions of subjectivity – herself as a child, and herself as an adult. Dolores "returns" to childhood, however, as a child who knows to treasure the supposed safety of those fledgling interactions that as yet can create no lasting schism if they go awry, but who also knows to fear the end of childhood and the coming disconnection – even exile – of adulthood:

> I just perched up there in the driver's seat and drove, letting them forget all about me, while I listened to their jumble of words, songs, and shouts and cries and it was almost as if I were not present, or were invisible, or as if I were a child again myself, a child blessed or cursed (I'm not sure which) with foresight, with the ability to see the closing off that adulthood would bring, the pleasures, the shame, the secrets, the fearfulness. The eventual silence; that too. (19)

This perception of childhood is, of course, highly idealized, and as Dolores herself points out at various points in the narrative, many of the children's "home lives were not exactly sweetness and light" (5). In truth, while she idealizes childhood in a general way and projects her desire for safety and connection onto certain of the children, she also sees her fear, disconnection, and her sense of being an outsider in other children. One of these, Sean Walker, most clearly represents the darker side of childhood. Dolores displays an empathic understanding of what Sean experiences as an "outsider," and of the limited domain in which he feels connected and competent:

> He was a strange little fellow, but you couldn't help liking him. Apparently, although he was way behind all the other kids his age in school and was too fragile and nervous to play at sports, he was expert at playing video games and much admired for it by the other children. A wizard, they say, with fabulous eye-hand coordination, and when sitting in front of a video game, he was supposed to be capable of scary concentration. It was probably the only time he felt competent and was not lonely. (21)

The empathic connection with Sean's loneliness and with the security he feels in those limited areas of his life in which he feels competent will later be echoed by Dolores when she talks about her job driving the bus. Still other children represent an even more profound level of a failure to fit in and of total disconnection from the community at large. Dolores groups those children collectively, referring to them only as the kids of Wilmot Flats, "mostly named Atwater, with a few Bilodeaus thrown in" (29), mentioning neither name nor any defining characteristic of any individual. This impersonal treatment stands in sharp contrast with the care she puts into describing other children on her route, and renders the "children of Wilmot Flats" a kind of faceless rabble beyond the pale – children whom Dolores herself characterizes as exiles:

> There's intermarriage up there and all sorts of mingling that it's better not to know about, and between that and alcohol and ignorance, the children have little chance of doing more with their lives than imitating their parents' lives. With them, says Abbott,

> you have to sympathize. Regardless of what you think of their parents and the rest of the adults up there. It's like all those poor children are born banished and spend their lives trying to get back to where they belong. And only a few of them manage it. The occasional plucky one, who happens also to be lucky and gifted with intelligence, good looks, and charm, he might get back, before he dies, to his native town. But the rest stay banished, permanently exiled, if not there on Wilmot Flats, then someplace just like it. (30)

Dolores's idealized perception of childhood as a time of belonging and harmlessness is simultaneously belied by her description of the children themselves. Likewise, the way she describes her relationship with children and her ability to unite them in a harmonious way is greatly idealized. There are, in fact strong indications that Dolores has difficulty dealing with children, as her uncomfortable dealings with the Lamston children indicates. She tends to visualize children as small adults, interpreting their behavior as adult behavior, and eschewing childlike behavior as inappropriate or undesirable. Her expectation of adult-like behavior leads Dolores to interact in some ways inappropriately with the children and her ability to deal with children ends when their behavior becomes child-like – that is, when their behavior is not like a mock version of adult behavior. Her response to such behavior is to suppress it, and even in suppressing that behavior, she tends to do so in ways that are only appropriate to an interaction between two adults.

Perhaps the most dramatic display of Dolores's unreasonable expectation of maturity in the children, and her own, at times, inappropriate, adult-like interaction with them occurs when she picks up Sean Walker. As already noted, Sean is an anxious child with a learning disability and very few connections with his peers. As a result of his difficulties, Sean is unusually dependent on his mother, Risa Walker. On the morning that Dolores is describing – the morning of the accident – Risa helped Sean onto the bus, and as she goes to cross the road in front of the school bus, she is nearly hit by a speeding car:

> Then suddenly Sean shrieked, "Mommy!" and he was all over me, scrambling to get across my lap to the window, and I glimpsed Risa off to my left, leaping out of the way of a red Saab that seemed to have bolted out of nowhere. It had come around the bend in front of me and the truck and hadn't slowed down a bit as I drew back onto the road, and the driver must have felt squeezed and had accelerated and had just missed clipping Risa as she crossed to the other side. I hit the brakes, and thank God the driver of the truck behind me did too, managing to pull up an inch or two from my rear. (24)

Sean's reaction is reasonable for a young child who has just witnessed his mother's narrow escape from death. Dolores's reaction however, which is no doubt to a substantial degree an expression of her own shock, is nonetheless an insensitive response to anyone's feelings, and especially inappropriate towards a young child:

> "Sean! Sit the hell down!" I yelled. "She's okay! Now sit down," I said, and he obeyed. (24)

Far from recognizing the inappropriateness of her own reaction and taking responsibility, Dolores continues to focus on Sean's behavior as she seeks to smooth things over. She attributes his reaction not to the panicked feelings of a young child who has nearly seen his mother killed in front of him, but to an adult-like worry about the dangers of traffic in general, the idiocy of some drivers, and the habitual peril to his mother when crossing such a road:

> "There's a lot of damn fool idiots out there, Sean," I said. 'I guess you got a right to worry.' I smiled at him, but he only glared at me, as if I were to blame. (25)

This incident shows us not only Dolores's realistic difficulties in dealing with children and interpreting their responses accurately, it also brings up the matter of Dolores's own responsibility or even culpability in that event. This issue of culpability, in particular with regards Dolores's bus driving is significant, of course, as it was she who is driving when the bus accident occurs a short time later. Sean's anger is no doubt directed at her for having shouted at him. Her perception that Sean's glare might contain an accusation that she is to blame for Risa's near death relates to her own sense that she may have contributed to the near accident. Although Dolores never claims direct responsibility, her description of that near-miss incident suggests that she herself nearly caused the accident by pulling out into traffic without having seen the car, thereby forcing the driver to accelerate. There is no implication that the driver was speeding as they passed first the

truck, and then the bus which stood in front of it – simply the observation that the car "seemed to have bolted out of nowhere." I will return to the matter of Dolores's driving presently. In addition, the fact that she has to slam on the brakes nearly causes a second accident as the eighteen-wheeler nearly hits the bus from behind. All of this is being recalled after the fatal bus crash; a fact which, in and of itself, stresses the issue of Dolores's driving and possible culpability.

The next child on Dolores's rout after the Lamstons is Bear Otto, of whom Dolores is particularly fond, and whom she professes to admire. Bear, the adopted son of Wanda and Hartley Otto, is an outgoing child whose interaction with Dolores is especially welcoming and affirming:

> From the Lamington's stop at McNeil and Avalanche, the route ran west along the ridge into the dark, […] out to the crest of the hill, where I picked up a kid I actually liked personally a whole lot and was always pleased to see. Bear Otto. […] Bear was ready and waiting for me, and the second I swung open the door he jumped straight into the bus from the ground, as if he had been planning it, and grinned in triumph and held out the flat of his hand for a high five, like a black kid from the city. I slapped it, and he said, "Yo, Dolores!" […]" (12)

In stark contrast to the Lamstons, Bear radiates a fondness and an acceptance of Dolores for which she must not make a great effort. In particular, Dolores praises those qualities in Bear that help to maintain a peaceful, conflict-free environment on the bus, and that

therefore minimize tension. Bear has a facility as a peacemaker, as Dolores describes it, and an ability to "bring out the best in people" that immediately calls to mind the qualities she would desire in a man:

> Numerous times, in the quick bristly quarrels that boys like to get into, I had seen him play the calm, good-natured peacemaker, and I admired him and imagined that he would turn into a wonderful man. He was one of those rare children who bring out the best in people instead of the worst. (13)

The phrase, to "bring out the best in people" refers to Bear's ability to smooth out conflicts, however it applies equally to his ability to evoke the best in Dolores's herself. In contrast to the Lamstons' moody silence or Sean Walker's anxious and needy lack of ease, Bear's easygoing and accepting nature makes it possible for Dolores to interact with him in a way that emphasizes the best in her nature – a true sanguinity, rather than a frantic attempt to defend against the silence of others that Dolores interprets as rejection or disdain.

These qualities in Bear – his warm and outgoing nature and his ability to manage and eliminate conflict – are qualities that Dolores equates with maturity or, more accurately, that Dolores wishes to see in adults. Those qualities in an adult would allow her to enjoy the same kind of frictionless interaction she enjoys with Bear. Naturally adults can be sullen and taciturn like the Lamstons, (as Abbott can be). They can also be needy and anxious like Sean – in other words, immature. Dolores not only acknowledges

this fact, she posits it as a reason for her efforts to encourage a precocious maturity in her own sons:

> That morning, while I waited for the Lamstons, I was thinking about my sons. Reginald and William. We always called them that, never Reggie or Billy; I think it helped them to grow up faster. Not that I was in a hurry for them to grow up. I just didn't want them to become the kind of men who think of themselves as little boys and then tend to act that way when you need them to act like adults. (8)

It is clear that Dolores does not deal very well with children's behavior when it presents her with an experience of rejection or of neediness. Her apprehension of children and of childhood is idealized, and yet at the same time, she recognizes that childhood is not so idyllic, especially for certain children. Her nostalgic bond to childhood looks back, most immediately, on a time when she had a relationship with her sons that, by virtue of their youth and their dependence on her, was a close relationship, and one over which she could exercise a certain degree of control. Their childhood represented a time in which she could decide how to manage the relationship without having to account for her sons' feelings or emotional needs, or for their autonomy to act on those feelings by withdrawing from her. As adults, Dolores's relationship with them is now subject to the same complexities, difficulties and "silence" that she associates with being an adult. Unlike her sons now, she can enjoy a warm repartee with children like Bear Otto, or can coerce a response from them, as she does with the Lamstons.

Dolores displays a certain sensitivity and awareness of the children's inner lives. At the same time, as happened when she shouted at Sean Walker, she also exhibits a certain intolerance of their feelings and situation in the way she deals with them, and in the rules she imposes on them:

> Rule number two: No fighting. Anyone fights, he by God walks. And no matter who starts it, both parties walk. Girls the same as boys. They could argue and holler at one another, but let one of them strike another, and both of them were on the road in seconds. I usually had to enforce this rule no more than once a year, and after that the kids would enforce it themselves. Or if they did hit each other, they did it silently, since the victim knew that he or she would have to walk too. (18-19)

This non-judicial rule serves to maintain quiet on the bus and to remove Dolores from the role of mediator in the children's conflicts, and it dramatically compounds the injustice done to the child who is struck by a peer. In essence, its ultimate purpose is not to stop the children from fighting, but merely to silence the needs of the child who is being victimized. It gives us a powerful insight into just how far removed Dolores is from the children's feelings (something we have also seen in her interactions both with the Lamstons and with Sean Walker). It also shows a somewhat ambivalent perception of silence, which she could not tolerate from the Lamstons, but which she desires in terms of what she perceives as needy demands. That ambivalence, in turn, calls to mind the odd division of her identity in which her "sanguine" behavior as compensation for silence is

contrasted with her admiration for self-contained, taciturn behavior and a succinct use of language.

Dolores's nostalgic attitude towards childhood as a halcyon time no doubt extends beyond the time when her two sons were still children. Her return in her imagination to her own childhood as she sits quietly in the driver's seat and pretending to be a child again marks a desire to return to a time when she bore no responsibilities for the welfare of others or for the outcome of relationships. As I have already noted, the issue of responsibility, and even culpability, prefigures Dolores's entire account, although she herself never addresses it directly. Indeed, as the person who was driving the bus when it went over the embankment and sank through the ice, the matter of responsibility is conspicuous in its absence. In the wake of the school bus accident, it is easy to understand Dolores's reluctance to address the question of responsibility. Driving the bus has afforded her an intense joy, a feeling of human connection and a sense of competence that she is unable to find elsewhere in her life. Much of her testimony betrays an effort to emphasize her level of competence both in terms of preparation as a means of avoiding problems, and in terms of her awareness of safety. She characterizes herself as someone whose nature is tempered by an abundance of caution:

> By nature I'm a careful person and not overly optimistic, especially when it comes to machinery and tools; I keep everything in tiptop condition, with plenty of backup. Batteries, tires, oil, antifreeze, the whole bit. I treated that bus like it was my own, may be even better, for obvious reasons, but also because that's my

> temperament. I'm the kind of person who always follows the manual. No shortcuts. (4)

Some of this characterization may have a basis in truth, however much of it represents an obvious effort to rehabilitate some of her behavior in order to make it appear more cautious than careless. In this same way, she attempts to explain her tendency to speed along the stretch of road where the accident occurred as a safety measure, rather than a habit that has arisen out of inattention and a desire to make quicker time:

> Coming down from the Flats on the Marlowe road towards the town, the greatest danger was that I would be going too slow and a lumber truck or some idiot in a car would come barreling along at seventy-five or eighty, which you can easily do up there, once you've made the crest from the other side, and would come up on me fast and not be able to slow or pass and would run smack into me, […]. As a result, since I didn't have any more stops to make once I'd gathered the kids from the Flats, I tended to drive that stretch of road at a pretty good clip. Nothing reckless, you understand. Nothing illegal. Fifty, fifty-five is all. Also, if I happened to be running a few minutes late, that was the only time when I could make up for it. (32-33)

The veracity of her self-characterization is somewhat belied by the reported impressions of other townspeople concerning her driving and her preparation. Billy Ansel, for

example, who is the town's chief mechanic, mentions the fact that after the accident, many people blamed Dolores both because of her driving and because of her instance on maintaining the bus herself. He then adds his own, somewhat more generous assessment of her capabilities:

> Many of the folks in Sam Dent have come out since the accident and claimed that they knew it was going to happen someday, oh yes, they just knew it: because of Dolores's driving, which to be fair, is not reckless but casual; or because of the condition of the bus itself, which Dolores serviced at home in her barn, and as a consequence it did not get the same supervision by me as the other school buses got; […]. (38)

Whatever truth there may be in Dolores's characterization of her own competence (or lack thereof), the question of her competence represents a point of vulnerability in terms of her own identity and the current of her subjectivity. Her general competence in a number of areas in her life are tightly interwoven throughout the narrative, including her competence in her relationship with her sons, her competence as a mother, her competence in her dealings with the school children, and her competence as the driver of their school bus. Ultimately, it is her role as school bus driver – a role which, like Sean when he plays video games, is the only time when she "felt competent and not lonely" (21) – that allows her to *compensate* for feeling incompetent in other areas of her life. Her true, underlying competence – is held apart in a Narrative domain as diverted subjectivity, fictionally attributed to Abbott (a self-contained nature and capacity for terse

observation) as a way of holding what conflicts with the sanguine nature she presents in her current identity (an attempt at good-natured inoffensiveness).

The impact of the accident on Dolores and the crisis it engenders is focused on this point of vulnerability, calling into question her competence at many levels and destroying the mechanism by which she compensates for areas if her life in which she feels less competent. Her relationship with the children is destroyed, not only in the case of those fourteen children who die in the accident, but with all of the children, when her job as school bus driver is taken from her. At a more personal level, her sense of pride in that job is annulled by her failure to conduct them safely to school. We see this shift from custodian of the children to the cause of their deaths in the metaphor Dolores habitually uses to describe the manner in which she picks the children up. The image she conjures – as though she were plucking berries – is a covalent reference that describes Dolores's role in the community both prior to, and following the accident. Initially a kind of pastoral image without negative connotation, the idea of "clearing the hillside of its children" takes on a macabre aspect in the wake of the accident as though she were the grim reaper:

> By the time I reached the bottom of Bartlett Hill Road where it enters Route 73 by the old mill, I had half my load, over twenty kids, on board. They had walked to their places on Bartlett Hill Road from the smaller roads and lanes that run off it, bright little knots of three and four children gathered by a cluster of mailboxes to wait there for me – like berries waiting to be plucked, I

> sometimes thought as I made my decent, clearing the hillside of its children. (17-18)

Dolores's descent, both as a literal reference to the downward stretch of road where the accident occurs and as a Dantean metaphor, marks her expulsion from the community, whether permanently or temporarily. Not only has Dolores lost her connection to the children, the trust of her fellow townspeople is also lost as they consider blaming her for the accident. She is not only stripped of her formal social function as school bus driver, but of her role as assistant mail carrier as well. Thus shut out of the town, either because she is blamed for the accident, or because she is an uncomfortable reminder of the town's loss, she is forced to seek employment in the closest city, Plattsburgh. The accident does more than sever social connections by calling Dolores's competence into question however. It also ties into her feeling of disconnection in her own family. Indeed, there is an unbroken line of association beginning with the distance she feels from her sons and her inability to restore that crucial connection, through the events leading up to the accident, to the accident itself. The motif that links each of these is the inability to find a course of action that will ensure a positive outcome, which she expresses with regards to her sons early in the narrative (cited earlier):

> Anyhow, I was feeling cut off from my sons, which is unusual and gives me an empty feeling in the stomach when it happens, almost like a hunger, and I wanted to do something to change it, but nothing would come to my mind. (9)

That sense of disconnection from her sons and her inability to restore that connection are not merely background to her account of the accident, but instead, form the very context in which the accident occurs. Dolores repeatedly mentions her preoccupation with that feeling of disconnection as an explanation for her actions, in relation to the series of events that lead to the accident itself. There are two "events" that precede the accident itself – the appearance of a dog in the road, and the "illusion" of a second dog shortly afterwards that causes her to swerve defensively. Dolores sees an unbroken chain of connections in her emotional response, first to her sense of disconnection from her sons and her helplessness to repair that bond, then to the appearance of the real dog, and finally the "appearance" of the second, illusory dog that causes her to swerve and go off the road.

The "first" dog, or real dog, dashes across the road in front of the bus and startles Dolores. Although this "first" dog does not create any problem for her, she attributes the appearance of the "second," imagined dog to this first dog:

> That's when I saw the dog. The actual dog, I mean – not the one I thought I saw on the Marlowe road a few minutes later. It's probably irrelevant, but I offer it as a possible explanation for my seeing what I thought was a dog later, since both were the same dull red color. The dog on Wilmot Flats was a garbage hound, one of those wandering strays you see hanging around the dump. They are often sick and vicious and are known to chase deer, so the boys

> in the town shoot them whenever they come across one in the woods. (30-31)

The "reappearance" of the dog a few minutes later as a psychological illusion no doubt derives from Dolores's exaggerated fear response to this first dog. The dog startles her at a moment when her thoughts were not on the task at hand, but on her sons:

> As I was saying, I had picked up the kids on the flats and was passing by the open chain-link entrance to the dump, when this raggedy old mutt shot out of the gate and ran across the road in front of me, and it scared the bejesus out of me, although I could not for the life of me tell you why, as he was ordinary-looking and there was no danger of my hitting him.
>
> My mind must have been locked onto something contrasted – my sons Reginald and William, since I felt that morning particularly estranged from them, and you tend to embrace with thought what you're forbidden to embrace in fact. For when that dog entered my field of vision, it somehow astonished and then frightened me. (31)

This incident with the dog is a non-event, however Dolores' reaction is infused with the intensity of emotions she feels regarding her sons and their distance from her, compounding those turbulent emotions with the shock of seeing the dog dash across the road, and doubtless the realization that she is not really focused on her driving. In a literal sense, the very fact that she is dwelling on her sons and not playing close attention to her

driving further undermines her sense of competence. In this moment of amplified emotion, Dolores's inner conflict, her feelings of helplessness and anxiety, are inextricably linked with a third near-accident leading up to the accident itself (the first and second being the sports car and the eighteen-wheeler in front of Risa Walker's home). With this intertwining of affective content, Dolores's reaction to the dog is amplified beyond all proportion to the event and persists even after the situation has been successfully negotiated:

> Although the snow was blowing in feathery waves by then, the road was still dry and black, easy to see, and I gripped the wheel and drove straight on, as if nothing had happened. For nothing had happened! Yet I wanted intensely to pull the bus over and stop, to sit there for a moment and try to gather my fragmented thoughts and calm my clanging nerves. (31-32)

Dolores herself is perplexed by her own reaction, and professes to offer it simply as an explanation for the second dog she sees a few moments later, establishing an unbroken chain of associations in which her feelings about her sons color her reaction to the first dog, and her exaggerated reaction to the first, real dog, dictates her reaction to the second dog. This second dog does not even exist, and in retrospect, Dolores recognizes that it was an "optical illusion" or an "afterimage" that arose in response to the shock she received when she saw the first dog:

> And, yes it was then that I saw the dog, the second dog, the one I may be only thought I saw. […] No, I am almost sure now that it

> was an optical illusion or a mirage, a sort of afterimage, maybe, of the dog that I had seen on the Flats and that had frightened and moved me so. But at the time I could not tell the difference. (33-34)

Again, like the situation with her sons (now linked to the illusory dog via a concatenated association with the real dog), Dolores does not know what course of action to take in order to secure a positive outcome. She believes, at the time, that she must either hit the dog or swerve, thereby putting the children at risk:

> And as I've always done when I've had two bad choices and nothing else available to me, I arranged it so that if I erred I'd come out on the side of the angels. Which is to say, I acted as though it was a real dog I saw or a small deer or possibly even a lost child from the Flats, barely a half mile away. (34)

While Dolores professes that she always arranges her actions so that she chooses the lesser of two evils – "erring on the distaff side, if you get my drift" (1) – the results of her actions prove the contrary. She is driven by the concatenation of associations and traumatic reactions beginning with her emotional upset over her disconnection from her two sons, to her overreaction to the real dog on the Wilmot Flats (for which, ironically, she does not swerve), to her exaggerated reaction to the after image of the dog a few moments later. With each instance her emotions are augmented and rational thought diminished until the choice that she ultimately makes leads her to swerve to avoid hitting the illusion of a dog (arisen from her own mind), thereby driving the bus over the

embankment. The trauma of the bus accident – a precipitating event – occurs as the result of Dolores's underlying traumatic experience, just as that past trauma dictates the way in which she will experience the accident, shaping, as it were, the traumatic crisis precipitated by the accident.

The lack of clarity in her thinking and awareness preceding the accident, during which time her mind has been dwelling on her sons, is followed by a moment of inescapable clarity and a complete loss of active agency as the bus begins its descent onto the ice:

> For the rest of my life I will remember that red-brown blur, like a stain of dried blood, standing against the road with a thin screen of blown snow suspended between it and me, the full weight of the vehicle and the thirty-four children in it bearing down on me like a wall of water. And I will remember the formal clarity of my mind, beyond thinking or choosing now, for I had made my choice, as I wrenched the steering wheel to the right and slapped my foot against the brake pedal, and I wasn't the driver anymore, so I hunched my shoulders and ducked my head, as if the bus were a huge wave about to break over me. (34)

The accident is bound by the series of associations that preceded it to another, earlier trauma – the "loss" of her sons. However that preceding trauma may eventually resolve itself, the accident ties Dolores irrevocably to the loss of "her" children – those who ride her bus:

> There was Bear Otto, and the Lamston kids, and the Walkers, the Hamiltons, and the Prescotts and the teenaged boys and girls from Bartlett Hill, and Risa and Wendell Walker's sad little boy, Sean, and sweet Nichole Burnell, and all the kids from the valley, and the children from the Wilmot Flats, and Billy Ansel's twins, Jessica and Mason – the children of my town – their wide-eyed faces and fragile bodies swirling and tumbling in a tangled mass as the bus went over and the sky tipped and veered away and the ground lurched brutally forward. (34-35)

Dolores's testimony ends here, in a sense frozen at the moment of the accident itself. Unlike the testimonies of Billy Ansel, Mitchell Stephens and Nicole Burnell, this first testimony doesn't focus on the aftermath of the accident or the changes that Dolores undergoes as a result. Naturally each of the four individuals, who give their accounts in the novel, including Dolores, will undergo a revision of subjectivity. As Billy Ansel notes in his account in the second chapter of the novel, recalling his experience after the death of his wife (by cancer) and his children (in the accident):

> When someone you love has died, you tend to recall best those few moments and incidents that helped to clarify your sense, not of the person who has died, but of your own self. And if you loved the person a great deal, as I loved Lydia and my children, your sense of who you are will have been clarified many times, and so you

will have many such moments to remember. I have learned that.

(43)

Dolores account is unique, however, in that she will return in the final (fifth) chapter of the novel to complete her testimony. (I will examine that continuation of her account in chapter five of this study.) Dolores's account will go farther than that of the novel's other primary characters, detailing not only her crisis, but her recovery from that crisis as and the revision of her subjectivity. The changes that she undergoes will give her a transcendent awareness, however, and her narrative voice will change as she claims the clarity and concise quality of observation that she has hitherto ascribed to Abbott. As this occurs, her analysis of the trauma suffered collectively by the town of Sam Dent and the changes that follow in its wake will benefit from her forced separation from her town and her emancipation from the need to cultivate the social bonds that were severed by the accident. Her revised narrative voice and her heightened awareness and clarity will enable her to provide a voice for Sam Dent itself – giving a dispassionate voice to the town's collective trauma.

4.2 Billy Ansel: A Topography of Separate Realities

In the novel's second chapter we are presented with the account of Billy Ansel, the widowed father of fraternal twins, Jessica and Mason, both of whom die in the accident. Billy drives behind the school bus every morning on his way to work, waving to his children sitting at the back of the bus. As a result, he is the only witness when the bus leaves the road and sinks through the ice. This close proximity and Billy's unique

relationship to the accident shapes his response to the tragedy, however that response is shaped to an even greater degree by the fact that Billy has experienced a series of significant traumata throughout his life. Indeed, those preceding traumata are interwoven throughout Billy's testimony in such a way that they cannot be separated from it, painting a much broader picture of the way in which Billy comes to terms with disruption to subjectivity and meaning, and ultimately demonstrating how one's entire field of prior experience comes to shape new experience. An understanding of Billy's traumatic crisis will first require an understanding of his existing traumatic vulnerabilities, in particular with regards loss.

Billy's traumatic experiences include his father's abandoning the family and burdening Billy with the responsibility of caring for his mother and siblings, his tour of duty as a field lieutenant in Vietnam, the loss of his wife, Lydia, to cancer, and ultimately the death of his two children. Each traumatic experience disrupts the semiotic current and divides subjectivity in a unique way. Those experiences represent an influx of heterogeneous experience that demands the revision of signified meaning (Idiolect), and that disrupts the almost imperceptibly perception of a temporal continuity in meaning and identity that ordinarily preserved by the gradual alteration of meaning. Abrupt traumatic experiences in particular (perhaps traumatic *because* they are abrupt) bring about a rupture in the normally seamless temporal succession of modified articulations of Idiolect, leading to an Idiolectic apprehension of reality *before* and an Idiolectic apprehension of reality *after* the experience in question.

Much like Fridolin's conflict of competing Idiolects as a result of deferred experience, abrupt (i.e. "catastrophic") trauma generates Idiolectic domains that compete with one another (with one relegated, in alternation, to a Narrative domain) such that the modified Idiolectic domain cannot be reconciled as a natural outgrowth of the originating Idiolect. The changes are too dramatic. Billy's response to traumatic experience is shaped by the fact that he has suffered a series of abrupt traumata in his life, and his reaction to each is affected by the traumatic experience that these. It will be useful then, to look at each of the preceding three traumatic experiences (the loss of his father, experience of combat in Vietnam, and the death of his wife) very briefly in order to clarify their role in his experience after the bus accident.

The first traumatic experience that Billy describes is the departure of his father when he was still a boy. That act of abandonment resulted in a split in Billy's subjectivity that is focused on excluding those character traits he associates with his father, and on emphasizing those traits he views as being diametrically opposed. Billy blames his father's leaving on his father's impractical streak, his seductive and romantic character, and his lack of substance:

> He was an impractical man, not quite honest, a fellow of grand beginnings and no follow-through, one of those men who present their children and wives with dreams instead of skills, charm in place of discipline, and constant seduction for love and loyalty. (63)

While an impractical and romantic nature is not in and of itself objectionable, those qualities were unbalanced in his father by the lack of more steadfast and practical qualities, and they therefore led to Billy's first traumatic loss. Rejecting those qualities in himself, Billy attempts to purge his father from his own identity. The identity that he "chooses" instead effectively negates those qualities he abhors:

> I am known as a self-contained man and am probably not very approachable, which has always been my choice of character anyhow, insofar as a person can choose his character. (63)

Naturally what Billy "banishes" from his public persona (manifested identity) is not eliminated from the semiotic current and from subjectivity. We will see those characteristics, and even a qualified acceptance of them emerge later in his relationship with Risa Walker, effectively merging competing identities in an uneasy, "separate but equal" kind of alliance.

Billy's choice to make a self-contained nature and emotional reserve the basis for his own public persona (i.e. his identity in the Communicative domain) serve a dual purpose. On the one hand, they serve to make Billy feels that he is a more "competent" man than his father, thereby allowing him to *avoid* the kind of disaster that resulted from his father's romantic but inconsistent nature:

> I like to be the strong, silent man in charge, the boss, the point man, the lieutenant, the head of the household, et cetera, a preference that may come from my having been the oldest of five children, with a more or less incompetent mother and a father who

took off for Alaska when I was twelve and was never heard from again. (63)

Cultivating a sense of stability and of difference from the parents who let him down creates a defense against Billy's anxiety that he might prove to be as feckless as his father, particularly with regards his own two children. At the same time, the stoic, capable, even courageous identity he claims as his own by banishing subjectivity that contravenes that identity, also serves a compensatory function. It not only gives him the sense that he can *avoid* trauma, but it also renders him somewhat impervious to the injuries inflicted by the traumatic experience – at least on the surface and in what he shows to others. Compensatory mechanisms such as repression and denial, in particular, can be passed off as innate character traits of stoicism and pragmatism.

The second significant trauma oft which Billy speaks is his tour of duty in Vietnam, during which he received a field promotion to Lieutenant that placed him in charge of a combat platoon. That field promotion mimics, in some senses, the abandonment by his father, since Billy obtains that commission and the responsibility for his platoon through the death (sudden loss) of his own immediate commander. The experience of combat, coupled with his role as ranking officer of his platoon, strengthened Billy's investment in his identity as a self-contained man of action. Indeed, Billy continued to take refuge in that role when he returned to Sam Dent after the war, where he opened his own garage and, for many years, refused to hire anyone but Vietnam veterans. As the school bus driver, Dolores Driscoll explains:

> Billy Ansel, though, was always a man with a mission. Nothing discouraged him or made him bitter. When he came back to Sam Dent, right away he joined the VFW post in Placid, and soon he became an officer and went to work making the boys who had served in Vietnam respectable there, at a time when, most places, people still thought of the as drug addicts and murderers. He got them out marching proudly with the other vets every Fourth of July and Veterans Day. In fact, until recently, to work for him at the garage you yourself had to be a Vietnam vet. He hired young men from all over the region, surly boys with long hair and hurt looks on their faces. At different times he even had a couple of black men working for him – very unusual in Sam Dent. His men were loyal to him and treated him like he was their lieutenant and they were still back in Vietnam. (28)

By creating a work environment that replicates his relationship with his subordinates in Vietnam, Billy is able to continue in the role of lieutenant and leader, dealing with the trauma suffered by those in his charge, while at the same time using that role as a compensatory mechanism to avoid dealing with his own trauma. This represents a lifelong tendency that started when he was forced to become the "man of the house" when his father left, and that continues on even through the death of his children in the school bus accident:

> It's something I have done since childhood, practically. When a person tries to comfort me, I respond by reassuring him or her – it's usually a her – and in that way I shut her down, smothering all her good intentions by denying my need.
>
> I can't help it, and I'm not sorry for it; I'm even a little proud. People think that I'm cold and unfeeling, but that's a price I've always been willing to pay. […] To forestall or cover my anger, I jump in front of them, and suddenly I myself have turned into the person come to provide comfort, reassurance, help, whatever it is they originally desired to provide me with. I take their occasion and make it my own. (75-76)

In psychological terms, Billy's primary method of dealing with traumatic crisis is called *compartmentalization*, a means of separating and quarantining conflicting or objectionable subjectivity and awareness as Billy did when he banished those character traits he saw in his father from his own identity. In many respects, the very nature of Billy's various traumatic experiences itself promotes compartmentalization as a compensatory response since those experiences are abrupt and demand a sudden and radical reanalysis of Idiolect (symbolized meaning and manifested identity). The abrupt demand for a substantially modification of Idiolect leaves a rift in symbolized meaning and identity, leaving (at least for some time) an invalidated reality that is invested with a great deal of experience, and a nascent reality that is demanded by a single, novel (traumatic) experience. As I suggested, the conflicted realities that arise vie with one

another for dominance as competing Idiolects, with first one, then the other, relegated to the status of a Narrative domain in alternation. This naturally leads to the isolation of experience and identity that precedes an abrupt traumatic experience from experience and identity that follows such an experience – at least until a means can be found to mediate between the two Idiolectic domains and merge their contents in a satisfactory manner.

Having been faced with a number of such traumatic experiences, Billy has developed an ongoing strategy of compartmentalization. That strategy is facilitated by a tendency to take refuge in *action*, thereby deferring the need to reflect and confront subjectivity and meaning that are conflicted. The role that Billy takes as the continued leader of the returning Vietnam veterans compartmentalizes his experiences in Vietnam, allowing him to preserve them within the context of his work environment as coexisting side-by-side, but not mingled with his life apart from the war (both before and after). Ultimately, Billy manages to contain the profound death-experience of Vietnam by creating a superstitious belief that bans death to that discrete period of time, thereby purging it from his ordinary life. In so doing, he is able to believe that, because death had occurred so abundantly in Vietnam, it is somehow spent and can no longer recur. This strategy creates separate realities that fall under their own set of rules, and yet that belong to a greater, overwhelming logic and causality. “Because trauma occurred, it cannot reoccur. That experience is separate.” The strategy also leaves him vulnerable, however, when he is at last confronted again with the possibility of death and loss.

The possibility of unforeseen death outside of Vietnam rears its head on a trip that Billy takes to Jamaica with his wife, Lydia, and the two young twins. There, the couple

spend all of their time stoned on marijuana, and as a result of their impaired thinking and perceptions, they accidentally drive off, leaving four-year-old Jessica in a grocery store surrounded by strangers. The initial realization that his daughter is missing from the car forcibly confronts Billy not only with the possibility that his children could die, but also with the possibility that he himself could be at fault for their death as a result of his irresponsible behavior. The barriers that Billy has created to compartmentalize conflicted experience are forcibly breeched – both in terms of the quarantine placed around these aspects of subjective identity associated with his future, and in terms of the quarantine placed around sudden death-experience. Billy is faced with the influx of conflicted, undesirable and traumatic awareness that he has been able to hold at bay through a kind of denial. His ability to function with the assumption of relative safety is superceded by a renewed awareness of the real ongoing potential of sudden loss. The field of meaning that has formed around traumatic experience has come to dominate as Idiolect. As Billy describes it:

> […] all I had to go by was what had happened to me in Vietnam when I was a nineteen-year-old kid, and by some necessary logic, I believed that because terrible things had happened to me then and there, that it was impossible for them to happen here and now. I did not want to give up that logic; it was like my childhood: if I admitted that my daughter had been kidnapped or had fallen from the car or had simply been lost in a foreign country, then the whole world for the rest of my life would be Vietnam. I knew that. (51)

Although this episode in Jamaica represents a *near* tragedy rather than an actual tragedy, it is profoundly significant in terms of Billy's experience of his own true character as opposed to his self-characterization. While Billy takes refuge in the notion that he is not an irresponsible man like his father, (making him a better father than his own father had been), the episode in Jamaica demonstrates that he does indeed possess the same character traits he despises in his father. Both his response to the near loss of his daughter, and his description of the event in his "testimony" years later illustrate his effort to sanitize and hold at bay traumatic experience and to deny his own involvement and responsibility. Even his perception of the purpose for the trip is skewed. Billy claims that he was providing his wife, Lydia and his two young children a wonderful family vacation, however in truth, they have gone there for the availability of ganja – a powerful type of marijuana, which Billy confesses is the couple's "recreational drug of choice" (45). The children's feelings and needs literally take an unattended back seat to what Billy and Lydia desire, as the couple stay stoned day and night. The children, Billy recalls, were bored, lonely, and anxious; something he attributes to a "developmental phase," or a supernatural awareness of *future* tragedy:

> They were lonely in Jamaica, and being the only white children in the village, or so it must have seemed to them, they were a little tense and frightened. All their routines were broken, and they were not used to being without TV, and they were not accustomed to receiving so much daytime attention from us. The twins were at a very cautious age that spring, and, too, they may have sensed, even

> before I or she herself did, that their mother was sick. Also, they weren't able, as Lydia and I were, to get stoned every day and night. (48)

It is only in retrospect that Billy realizes how unhappy his children had been on that trip, and even in looking back, he does not appear to recognize his own culpability in that unhappiness or the great risk in which he placed his family. Rather than expressing regret that he endangered his children or made them so miserable, he remarks that he feels sorry for them – as though he were a detached observer and not the author of the situation:

> Looking back, I feel very sorry for them. Then, I thought that we were all having the time of our lives, which made it easier for me to accept the high level of anxiety that the time of our life extracted as payment. We were surrounded by black people, people who carried machetes and sold drugs openly and talked a foreign-sounding English in loud voices, who pointed at us because of our skin color and made ugly noises with their lips at my wife or smiled and lied and tried to take our money. But here we are on vacation in Jamaica, I thought. Isn't that just the greatest thing an American dad can do for his family? I think I'll celebrate and reward myself by getting blasted on this terrific ganja that I bought today for only ten bucks while getting the car filled with gas. (48-49)

Billy's detachment from his responsibility towards his four-year-old children is remarkable even in the retelling years later, after the death of the twins in the school bus accident. As Billy describes the twin's experiences at Westgate, the very grocery store at which he and Lydia will accidentally leave Jessica, we see both the threat to the children's well being and safety, as well as the bizarre detachment with which Billy regards the situation:

> The last time we had come here [Westgate], Jessica and Mason had been hassled in the parking lot by a bunch of local kids attracted to them by their whiteness and the fact that they were twins, which seemed to have an unusual fascination for people down there, even though they were not identical twins. It was harmless enough, but because there hadn't been any adults to control the Jamaican kids, the episode had scared Jessica and Mason. They were only four years old and did not have much interest in other cultures. (47-48)

Here, Billy's compartmentalization emerges on multiple levels, including in his attempt to rationalize the mobbing of Jessica and Mason by the Jamaican children because they are fraternal twins (although it is impossible to say how the local children guessed that they were twins), and the obtuse observation that, as four-year-olds, Jessica and Mason lacked the requisite curiosity about "other cultures" to appreciate the situation. Most remarkable, however, is Billy's remote observation that the episode had been frightening to the twins because "there hadn't been any adults to control the Jamaican kids," as though he and Lydia were not the adults who had failed to do so.

Having left the grocery, it is only after they are well underway that Billy first notices that Jessica is not with them. His delayed realization is mimicked by the manner in which he shapes the narrative, first observing that the twins are not sleeping as he expected, then obtusely noting what Mason was doing before concluding that Jessica was missing:

> Halfway up the first long hill, I turned back to smile at the twins in back. They had been silent since Westgate, and I expected them to be asleep, curled up in each other's arms like litter mates, like puppies or kittens, which was their inclination then, […]. But they were not sleeping. Mason stared absently out the window; he was alone in the back seat. Jessica was gone. (50)

Again, Billy responds to this very real crisis by denying the reality if the situation, immediately compartmentalizing it. This strategy allows him to hold tragedy at bay, at least in his mind. Rather than stopping the car immediately and going back, and rather than saying anything to his wife about the absence of their daughter, Billy continues to drive:

> I said nothing, kept driving the overheated Escort up the curving narrow road, and with a sideways glance checked the rear doors, for perhaps one had opened and – too horrible to believe, maybe, but not too horrible to imagine, not for me – she had fallen from the car without a cry and, amazingly, no one had seen it, not even

her twin brother, seated next to her. Both doors were shut tight. (50-51)

The possibility is too horrible to believe as long as the Idiolectic domain remains compartmentalized, quarantined from experience that is incommensurate. Sudden traumatic loss is a part of experience held in a Narrative domain – the domain where imagination occurs – including the loss of his father and losses suffered in Vietnam. That manner of experience is not accommodated in Idiolect – Billy's apprehension of "reality." Consequently, he carries on driving until he arrives at home, wasting precious time during which he could return and get his daughter before something truly does happen to her. As he continues with his strategy of compartmentalization, refusing to articulate his loss in order to prevent it becoming real (i.e. manifested in Idiolect), he inexplicably places the burden of responsibility for Jessica's absence on her four-year-old brother, Mason:

> It was almost evening, time to cook supper. Where was our daughter? How had she been taken from us?
>
> I kept driving straight on towards what we called home and could not say aloud the words that were thrashing me, as if somehow remaining silent I could keep the terrible thing from having occurred. Finally, when we passed through the gate and drew up in front of the house, I said, without turning back to him, "Mason, is Jessica asleep?" (51)

Billy's behavior in response to this emergency situation and Billy's expectations of Mason are bizarre and inappropriate. In the panic of his impending crisis however (a panic that is compounded by the drugs in his system), Billy perceives Mason's matter-of-fact explanation of what has occurred to be bizarre:

> Mason's response was very strange – or at least that's how I remember it. Of course, you have to keep in mind that Lydia and I were pretty much stoned all the time […]. Mason answered, "You left her in the store." Straight out, as if he were slightly pleased by my having abandoned his twin sister and somewhat annoyed by his having to remind me. (52)

There is no expression of relief that Jessica has not fallen out of the moving car and no rush to turn around and return for her, but instead, Billy continues to push responsibility for his own negligent error on his young son:

> I started to holler. "Jesus, Mason! I left her at the store? Why the hell didn't you say something?" (52)

In this exchange between Billy and his son, there is a reversal of their respective roles, as though Mason had been responsible for ensuring that he and his sister remained safe. Billy chastises Mason for the failure to act (i.e. to tell Billy that Jessica has been left behind), although in truth, it is his own failure to respond to Jessica's absence, going so far as to drive all the way home before addressing her absence, that is both incomprehensible and reprehensible. This act of shifting responsibility for the family's

safety ad well-being onto Mason immediately casts him in the role of his father, who ceded his responsibility for his family to Billy.

This episode, while not tragic in its ultimate outcome, gives us a sound understanding of Billy's later rejection of the way in which many other residents of Sam Dent deal with the school bus accident; in particular, those who seek to blame someone for the accident. His later insistence that assigning culpability can provide only a false understanding of events reflects a legitimate comprehension of how complex the precipitating factors in such a tragedy can be, but it also demonstrates his own reflexive tendency to compartmentalize his own guilt and responsibility for unfortunate events. Billy's insistence that the school bus accident was just that – an accident – reiterates his tendency to avoid culpability so plainly demonstrated in Jamaica five or more years before. He distinguishes, in this sense, between purposeful malefaction, and personal failure that comes about through a momentary lapse in attention and a concatenation of contributing factors:

> "My God! How could we do that?" Lydia cried. "How could we have left her there?"
>
> […]
>
> "What the hell did I do? I didn't do anything wrong, it was a goddamn accident," I said.
>
> "No one's to blame, we're both to blame, we're all to blame, even she is, so let's just get back there and pray she's alright. That no one –"

> "She'll be fine," I said. "No one'll hurt her. These people, they love children." I said it, but I didn't believe it. How could my four-year-old daughter be safe among people that I myself felt frightened of? (52-53)

The degree to which Billy is willing to deny culpability or even causality rests on his investment in safeguarding current identity from "infiltration" by the "irresponsible" character traits associated with his father, as well as on his ability to banish incommensurate experience to a safely contained, separate symbolized domain. Thus compartmentalized, he need not seek an explanation for tragic loss (or near-loss) in causality. Indeed to do so would mean the integration of that experience within the terms and logical relations of Idiolect – something he will not, or cannot do. Billy's concluding thought on culpability is perplexing. He does eventually recognize that he can blame no one for his daughter's misery but himself (if not for leaving her behind, which Lydia ought to have noticed as well, then for continuing to drive all the way home when he realized that she was missing). At the same time, he all too readily accepts Lydia's statement that it was not his fault, which represents more an effort to put an end to Billy's protests and to spurn him into action than to exonerate him:

> The image of flaxen-haired Jessica searching the aisles of the store for us, wide-eyed, fighting tears, lower lip trembling as she starts to call for us, "Mommy? Daddy? Where are you?" – the thought made me tremble with rage, and because I could not blame my wife or son for what Jessica was enduring, I had to blame myself

> alone, and because, as Lydia had said, I could not blame myself
> alone, I blamed love. (53)

From a psychological perspective, it is true that Billy is unable to blame himself, as this is prohibited by his inability to tolerate irresponsibility, recklessness or inaction in his own subjectivity – characteristics he ascribes to his father and that he has banned. An admission of culpability in leaving Jessica behind at Westgate would constitute an admission that, like his father, he is irresponsible enough to "leave his children behind," and such an admission would annul the compartmentalization of that original trauma. It is even possible that an admission of culpability in his role as father could damage the compartmentalization of his traumatic experiences in Vietnam, where his men's lives were dependant upon his capabilities as a leader and where an error or moment of inattention could cost them their lives.

By shifting the blame away from himself and by instead blaming "love," Billy ultimately declares the tragedy to be not the near-loss, or potential loss of his daughter, but the trauma and suffering that would follow such a loss. His own vulnerability, in other words, which arises from his love for his family, is to blame for the misery that he feels during the episode. This gives us a sense of Billy's underlying, possibly defensive selfishness and focus on his own suffering rather than that of his family – a selfishness and self-interest that is made vivid in Billy's absurd willingness to give up his daughter:

> There was a single strange thought leading me into the store: I will make this one last try to save her, and then I will give it up. I must have known that if my child was indeed lost to me, then I would

> need all my strength just to survive that fact, so I had decided ahead of time not to waste any of my strength trying to save what was already lost. (54)

The near loss of his daughter represents another step in the progressive invasion of death into life that began in Vietnam, if not with the loss (although not death) of his own father. The quarantine he has placed around his experiences in the war (a kind of "lightning-never-strikes-twice" mentality) is breeched, and as Billy describes it, Vietnam invades his ordinary life:

> This was the beginning of what I have come to think of as the permanent end of my childhood and adolescence. The Vietnamization of my domestic life. Which is why I am telling you this. What had been an exception was now possibly the rule. (53)

The progressive advance of death on Billy's consciousness is furthered by his next experience of traumatic loss only a year after the trip to Jamaica, when his wife, Lydia, dies of cancer. In the same way that Billy seemed prepared to *prematurely* accept the loss or death of his daughter, he seems prepared to prematurely accept the death of Lydia, purging their home of her presence even before she has died:

> I remember one night shortly after my wife, Lydia, went into the hospital to stay, I gathered up all of her clothing and spread it out across our bed – dresses, blouses and skirts. Jeans and shirts, nightgowns, her underwear, even – and folded everything neatly and boxed it and carried the boxes out to the garage, where we

> have a storage room in the back. I don't know why I did that; she hadn't died yet, although I knew of course that in a few weeks at most she would be dead from cancer. But I could not bear to look at her clothes hanging in our closet or see them whenever I opened a dresser drawer; I could not bear even to walk past the closet or dresser and know that her clothes were inside, hanging or neatly folded in darkness like some foolish hope for her eventual return. (42)

Billy's perspective of death clearly is that it is unstoppable – an inevitability. By packing Lydia's clothes and belongings before she is even dead, however, Billy is doing more than merely ceding to what he perceives to be inevitable. In effect, he compartmentalizes symbolized meaning and identity (the structure of Idiolect) that he is about to loose, insulating it from symbolized meaning that will succeed it in the wake of the tragic event.

By not attempting to "make sense" of an event, and instead, by embracing a new symbolized order even before it is demanded, Billy is able to avoid *merging* those two orders. This serves the dual purpose deferring the traumatic suffering that results from being caught between competing Idiolects and trying to reconcile their differences, while at the same time preserving the integrity of those competing Idiolectic domains. In the wake of the tragedy, he willingly takes up a kind of existential residence in the space *between* competing fields of meaning, focusing on action and avoiding reflection or discussion that might force him to integrate past with present meaning and identity. This allows him to continue functioning, taking care of his business and his children without

succumbing to the disorganization of cognition and subjectivity that traumatic crisis (disruption of the semiotic current) generates:

> For a long time, though, that was my whole life. There was no way I could let myself think about anything that did not lie directly before me – the death of my wife, the physical and emotional needs of my children, and my business. It was as if during that period I were crossing a crevasse on a high wire, and if I once looked down at the ground or off to the side or even ahead of me or behind, I'd fall, and I'd take down with me anyone holding on to me, meaning my children. (59-60)

By maintaining competing fields of meaning (and therefore, competing symbolized identities) without merging them, Billy is able to preserve what is lost, moving between incommensurate symbolized domains as though within a topography. Billy himself is aware of the dichotomy that this creates. He explicitly articulates the bifurcation of meaning and subjectivity when he describes Wendell Walker, the husband of Risa Walker, with whom he was having an affair at the time of the bus accident:

> Wendell is like the rest of us, a person whose life has two meanings, one before the accident and one after. I doubt, however, that he worries much about connecting the two meanings, as the rest of us do, but that's Wendell Walker. (58)

Billy becomes involved with Risa Walker after the death of Lydia, but before the bus accident claims the lives of his twins, and the couple regularly meet in room 11 of

Risa and Wendell's Bide-a-While Motel. Even within the context of having "moved on which his life," Billy continues to compartmentalize conflicted experience. He vacillates between competing realities, taking the opportunity to abide in his previous life and prior meaning when Risa is unable to get away to meet him. The room becomes a covalent space in which, as in a suspended reality, Billy may enjoy Risa's company, or in which he may indulge in a quiet recollection of meaning and identity that had their validity in an earlier time. The room number itself, like the occurrence of the doubled letters, 'll' in the names of each of the primary characters), serves as a graphemic expression of the duality experienced by Billy and all of the traumatized individuals.)

> Many nights Risa could not get away to room 11, and I sat there by myself in the wicker chair beside the bed for an hour or so, smoking cigarettes and thinking and remembering my life before Lydia dies […]. (40-41)

Billy manages to unite divided subjectivity in an uneasy alliance within the context of his relationship with Risa Walker. Risa is the first woman in whom Billy develops an interest after the death of his wife, Lydia. Plagued by fears that showing an interest in a woman, even in fantasy, might constitute a kind of infidelity, it is perhaps no coincidence that the woman he chooses is married, and therefore ultimately unavailable. The relationship with Risa is self-limiting then, ensuring that she will remain no more than a lover (thereby preserving Billy's 'technical' fidelity to Lydia, as he did even when

she was alive).[7] Simultaneously, that relationship is with a woman who is better suited as a wife than as a casual sexual dalliance. Billy's choice to pursue a relationship with Risa is predicated on the kind of woman that she is. Far from a merely sexual attraction, Risa's casual and down-to-earth nature and manner of dress appeals to Billy precisely because she is *not* a traditional "bombshell" about which men often fantasize (60). As Billy describes her:

> She is the kind of woman who makes a man think of his favorite sister, if he has one, or his best friend's sister, if he doesn't. Not a likely candidate for an erotic fantasy. (62)

The relationship with Risa enables Billy to merge both rejected subjectivity and his chosen identity of the "silent hero." (As will be the case with all of the novel's primary characters, the etymology of Billy's name echoes his role in the community. Billy Ansel's name means 'warrior' and 'anvil' – a reflection of the silent, strong and unyielding hero identity he presents to the community.) The nature of the relationship itself safeguards his identity as Lydia's husband by restricting the relationship to a few regular, clandestine meetings. At the same time, the fact that Risa is more like someone's wife or sister than a woman with whom one might have a causal sexual encounter gives the affair some of the qualities of a more permanent type of relationship. The capacity of this relationship to integrate divided subjectivity is evident even in the earliest stages of

[7] "Technically I was faithful to Lydia from beginning to end. There were a couple of occasions while we were married when, drunk or stoned or just inattentive, I slipped into what might be called compromising positions with a few local women, who shall remain nameless, but I got out before any damage was done and was even able to come home feeling virtuous. And there were a few sexual encounters with bar girls and prostitutes when I was in the service, Stateside and in Vietnam and once in Honolulu. Sowing wild oats, as they say. But in fact, for my age, I was unusually inexperienced in sexual matters" (65).

the relationship. As he begins to flirt with Risa, he himself witnesses, with some discomfiture, the mingling of his "silent hero" identity with those traits he associates with his father that he so despises – traits that nevertheless include a seductive charm best suited for establishing the kind of relationship that he desires with Risa:

> Anyhow, when I began trying to seduce Risa Walker, I found myself behaving like my father, which embarrassed me and made me feel incompetent as well. I felt his phony smile on my face, heard his glib words coming from my mouth, and it made me cringe. (64)

Initially Billy is unable to reconcile the emergence of these characteristics in his behavior with his primary identity. Horrified to hear his father's voice coming from his own mouth, Billy is repeatedly compelled to break off his flirtation and return to his more taciturn, self-contained self. The result is an abrupt oscillation between divided and competing manifestations of subjectivity dissociated long ago at the trauma of being abandoned by his father:

> I'd smile and smile and yammer on, playing a part. Then suddenly I'd switch roles. I'd have somehow become a member of the audience, and I'd hear myself yammering on, and it would be my father, and I'd see myself wink and grin and see my father, so I'd break off in the middle and freeze Risa out completely, leaving her somewhat confused, I'm sure. (64)

As it begins to develop, Billy's clandestine relationship with Risa allows not only the dissociated identity of the suave (but perhaps insubstantial and irresponsible) charmer to emerge, but it also enables and supports his chosen identity as silent hero and man of action. That identity functions best, and indeed may only function at all, within the context of an interpersonal relationship – that is, within a relationship in which being self-contained does not constitute a total social withdraw, and in which silent courage serves a shared, social goal. Clearly a part of the appeal of the relationship comes from the fact that within that relationship, Billy can experience himself as embodying that desired identity:

> […] that night it appeared to me that Risa alone made it possible for me to be, once again, not my father but myself, the strong, silent type of man I admired and had grown used to being, and I was deeply relieved and immensely grateful to her. (66)

Ultimately the affair allows for a covalent bond between the two identities where those identities are neither merged, nor separable from one another, but exist simultaneously and each in its own right. At the same time, Billy can experience the relationship itself as a covalent bonding of technical fidelity to Lydia on the one hand, and the satisfaction of a clearly delimited relationship on the other. That covalent suspension between *eigenstates* is made possible by the privacy of their relationship, which establishes a very closed discursive community:

> Our love affair seemed to be permanently suspended halfway between fantasy and reality. Our sense of time and sequence was

> open-ended; it was like a movie with no beginning and no ending, and it remained that way because we did nothing to make our relationship public, to involve other people, a process that would have been started if Risa had ever confided to someone or if I had revealed it to someone. That would have objectified it somehow, taken it outside our heads, and no doubt would have led Risa to choose between me and Wendell, or would have led me to demand it. (66-67)

It is the absence of an interjected, third discourse – the prescriptive mirroring of the Communicative domain made up of a larger discursive community – Billy and Risa are able to create precisely what they need out of the affair. By making their apprehension of that experience private and by not limiting one another's perceptions of the affair, that affair can exist in that twilight state between reality and fantasy without being called to conformity by shared signification:

> Risa has always assured me that no one knew we were in love; she insisted that during the nearly three years we were involved she confided in no one. Consequently, she had her private version of the love affair, and I had mine, and there was no third version to correct them. (66)

The relationship with Risa provides a temporary solution for divided subjectivity, however the death of Billy's children in the bus accident disrupts the compensatory mechanism provided by the affair. The relationship unravels for a number of reasons after

that tragedy. To begin with, the relationship with Risa is tied to the accident itself. Billy had been daydreaming on the morning of the accident – fantasizing about having sex with Risa when the bus went through the guardrail and onto the ice:

> Just to show you how far I was from predicting the accident or suspecting that it could occur – even though, except for Dolores Driscoll, who drove the bus, I was surely the person in town closest to the event, the only eyewitness, you might say – at the moment it occurred I was thinking about fucking Risa Walker. My truck was right behind the bus when it went over, and my body was driving my truck, and one hand was waving at Jessica and Mason, who were aboard the bus and waving back at me from the rear window – but my eyes were looking at Risa Walker's breasts and belly and hips […]. (37)

The moment of schism, in which the abrupt interjection of heterogeneous experience generated by the accident calls for a dramatic revision of Idiolect, occurs during the midst of this fantasy. This schism juxtaposes Billy's lack of awareness of his immediate surroundings (the absence of an awareness that might possibly have allowed him to see the accident coming) with the inescapable detail of the accident itself:

> So I don't know anything of what immediately preceded the accident, although once it happened, of course, I saw it all, every last mind-numbing detail. And still do, every time I close my eyes. (37-38)

Billy denies feeling guilty about having been daydreaming about sex with Risa at the time of the accident, however it is not clear that this assertion is true. Certainly it prevents Billy from talking about a part of his traumatic experience, since that affair must remain clandestine. In this sense, the secretive nature of the affair prevents him from speaking about a critical aspect of his traumatic experience, and it is likely that he regrets at least the illicit nature of the affair in that context. The fact that Billy mentions guilt in relation to that fantasy several times throughout the narrative, as well as the unfortunate juxtaposition of that fantasy with the accident and the subsequent abrupt end of Billy's interest in Risa after the disaster seems to attest that he does indeed feel some degree of guilt, even if he desires it:

> I feel guilty for it, of course – for conducting the affair, I mean, not for having a fantasy about sex with her at that awful moment in my life, in her life, in the life of everybody in this town, practically. (39)

It is not without irony that it is precisely Risa's assertion that she saw the accident coming that Billy claims "turned him off," since his preoccupation with her and with their affair prevents him from "seeing it coming," even though he was driving right behind the bus. In that sense, the accident echoes the earlier trauma of nearly loosing his daughter, since once again his focus was elsewhere, rather than on his children, even as he was actively waving to them. What is certain is that, as Billy leaves the scene of the accident having helped to recover the bodies not only of his own children, but also of

Risa's son, Sean, the fantasy about Risa forms the terminal end of one symbolized field of meaning and identity (his life before the accident), and the beginning of a new one:

> […] finally I was alone, plodding along the side of the road,
> moving uphill, back the way barely two hours earlier the school
> bus had come and then right behind it I had come with my pickup,
> idly daydreaming of sleeping with Risa Walker. (72)

Unlike Dolores Driscoll's testimony, which places little focus on the accident itself, Billy Ansel's testimony gives us a very detailed account, particularly of the immediate aftermath of the accident. Billy's description demonstrates many of the classic responses to trauma, including an array of dissociative phenomena. His very ability to remain on the scene and to help in recovering the children's bodies out of the freezing water depends upon Billy's extraordinary degree of dissociation and capacity to compartmentalize. Billy takes refuge in his identity as emotionally remote, self-contained hero, which allows him to defer reflection:

> Later I learned that people thought I was being courageous. Not so.
> There were selfish reasons for my behavior. I shoved everyone
> away and kept more or less to myself, silent, stone-faced, although
> continuing nonetheless to help the other men, as we received one
> child after another from the divers and wrapped them in blankets
> and dispatched them in stretchers up the steep slope to the road and
> the waiting ambulances, as if by doing that I could somehow
> prolong this part of the nightmare and postpone waking up to what

> I knew would be the inescapable and endless reality of it. No one spoke. Somehow, at bottom, I did not want this awful work to end. That's not courage. (70)

Devoid of reflection, devoid of emotion, and ensconced in the safety of a silent identity that need neither reflect nor communicate, Billy perceives himself as wholly divorced from the scene in which he takes part. That identity in which he seeks refuge is itself be derived from a dissociative process that arises in response to prior trauma:

> "[…] a few others, like Risa, just stood among friends and relatives and stared silently at the ground, their minds emptied of thought and feeling.
>
> I guess I was one of these, although at first I had tried to keep on working down below alongside the other men, as if my own children had not been on the bus, as if this had happened to someone else and not me." (70)

Billy himself recognizes this reaction as a return to a dissociative, emotionless state he experienced in the midst of earlier traumata such as the death of his wife (cited above), and most particularly, his tour of duty in Vietnam:

> Jimbo Gagne called from the garage, and as usual, it was like we were both in Vietnam again – I was playing the lieutenant and he the corporal. We were all logistics. What did I want him to do with my truck? Leave it at the garage; I'd drive my car in tomorrow. Where should he put the wrecked bus? Out of sight behind the

> garage, and keep people away from it, because there was sure to be an investigation. (77)

The level of dissociation that Billy experiences is very profound, in particular in the first few hours after the accident. Although "every mind-numbing detail" (37) of the accident is burned in memory (e.g. held in the Epistemic domain as somatosensory experience), Billy is simultaneously unable to order those details and experiences logically using symbolized terms and relations – what Janet would call *narrative memory.* In this way, although he perceives that the wrecker has raced to the scene to drag the bus out of the water, he is unable to make the connection that he, himself, called for the wrecker (somatosensory experience is passed incorrectly to the Ethical domain as Other, rather than as Self). Only later, as experience begins to find accommodation in the symbolized terms of Idiolect or a Narrative domain does he make the connection:

> Jimbo and Bud from the garage […] had raced out at once with the wrecker when they heard in the CB that there had been an accident (a message that in fact I myself had called in, although I don't know how I managed that; I don't even remember it), […]. (70)

With the abrupt interjection of heterogeneous experience – the death of his children in an accident that he himself witnessed – Billy finds himself lost in a gap that has opened up between a field of symbolized meaning that has been suddenly invalidated, and a new field that has yet to be fully constituted around that heterogeneous experience. That field will have to signify his children as no longer existent and his role as father no longer active (foreclosed identity), among a myriad of other, secondary changes. These

changes are so central to meaning and identity, however, that it will be inevitable that *all* instances of signification will be called into question as their position in a newly constituted Idiolect is established – in relation to these principal changes. In the immediate moment when this gap opens up between invalidated and nascent symbolized meaning, the crisis of lost meaning has not yet emerged. As long as Billy can take refuge in action, thereby deferring reflection and the inevitable comparison of those competing symbolized fields of meaning, he can defer his crisis.

Traumatic crisis itself will only arise once reflection becomes possible, which is to say, as a *new* symbolized domain is negotiated and begins to take shape. As a new Idiolect emerges, it must restructure all of the various existent instances of symbolized meaning in relation to novel experience. At the same time, the abrupt demand for those changes disrupts the gradual temporal evolution of meaning that is needed to maintain the perception that symbolized meaning is an accurate reflection of a stable, external reality. This gradual emergence of a revised symbolized order through cognitive reflection accounts for the delay in the manifestation of traumatic symptoms that is often observed, in particular after "catastrophic events." It is only when one begins to negotiate a symbolized apprehension of an experience (i.e. experience us passed to a symbolized domain) and the need to restructure Idiolect emerges that the full disruption of the semiotic current emerges.

In the absence of an adequately constituted symbolized domain (a revised Idiolect), and experiencing disruption in those domains that precede the symbolized terms and relations of language, Billy finds that he is unable to speak of the accident in any

meaningful way. The terms of Idiolect as they have been defined *before* the accident are not adequate to formulate a *narrative* (i.e. narrative memory) of the actual loss of his children, although he had, by contrast, been able to consider and signify that loss as a hypothetical possibility:

> Before you loose your children, you can talk about it – as a possibility, I mean. You can imagine it, like I did that time in Jamaica, years ago, and then later you can remember the moment when you first imagined it, and you can describe that moment coherently to people and with ease. But when the thing that you only imagined actually happens, you quickly discover that you can barely speak of it. Your story is jumbled and mumbled, out of sync and unfocused. At least that's how it has been for me. (78)

Expressed as a hypothetical possibility, signification of that loss occurred in a Narrative domain that did not disrupt Idiolect – a Narrative domain being a domain in which hypothesis, fantasy, creative activity and dream are generated, held and structured. It is an altogether more difficult matter to enact the permanent modification of one's baseline apprehension of reality in Idiolect.

With the abrupt demand for a newly constituted apprehension of "reality" brought about by the accident, meaning and identity as Billy knows them continue to occupy Idiolect only for as long as Billy refuses to believe the reality of what has happened (dissociation as described above). When that denial becomes impossible, his previously held apprehension of meaning and identity must be relegated to a Narrative domain. Post-

trauma Idiolect remains vaguely formed around the experience or experiences that impel its formation and ascendance over prior experience, leaving the Narrative domain (prior Idiolect) invalidated, but nevertheless the more fulfilling and more fully formed domain. This invalidated field of meaning will remain the more compelling, fully formed apprehension of "reality," interjecting itself into awareness until prior experience contained within it can be reanalyzed (through reflection) and arranged within a new apprehension of meaning and identity – one that now forms around heterogeneous experience (i.e. traumatic experience).[8] The semiotic current must move between two articulations of identity until the reanalysis of prior symbolized terms and their subsequent accommodation in a newly constituted Idiolect can be achieved. The phenomenon of "double speak" and divided subjectivity observed in traumatic crisis (see section 1.3) therefore represents a natural part of the process by which novel experience is accommodated within symbolized meaning, not a pathology as previously assumed.

The accident assails the existent structure of Idiolect at a very basic and essential level, violating core beliefs and expectations that have helped to structure both meaning

[8] The theory that I am presenting here addresses the manner in which heterogeneous experience is integrated into the existent structures of the organizational domains, and the effect of such experience on the semiotic current (i.e., subjectivity). Although my focus is on "traumatic" experience, the same mechanism is at play when novel experiences are accommodated that are subjectively perceived to be positive in nature. A great deal of this study has examined the dissociative phenomena that underlie traumatic crisis, however here it becomes necessary to appeal to Freud's notion of repression. Certain heterogeneous experiences such as sudden fame, moving to a new country, marriage, etc., may represent dramatically novel experience for the individual. These kinds of experiences, which may be judged subjectively to be positive experiences, nevertheless do disrupt the semiotic current in the manner described by this study, even producing a degree of dysphoria and the disruption of subjective identity and of the semiotic current. Being judged positive, however, will mean that such experiences may be more readily integrated into Idiolect, or that a new Idiolect can form more easily around such experiences. Experience that is judged to be traumatic, on the other hand, is likely to be evaluated as abhorrent in existent Idiolect, and a difficulty may arise for the individual attempting to restructure Idiolect around an experience that (in the existent symbolized field of meaning) is regarded as undesired, socially unacceptable, or even ethically abhorrent. Such a judgment will delay the restructuring of the organizational domains, and prolong the disorganization produced by heterogeneous experience to a degree associated with traumatic crisis.

and identity. The accident, in other words, violates Billy's fundamental expectations of the world including the presumption that, as the father of Jessica and Mason, he would never have to witness their deaths, but as their elder, would die first. This belief that, in the natural order of things, a parent should die before his children has lent Billy a degree of security, delimiting the degree of anxiety he felt about the potential for such loss:

> It's almost beyond belief or comprehension that the children should die before the adults. It flies in the face of biology, it contradicts history, it denies cause and effect, it violates basic physics, even. It's the final contrary. A town that loses its children loses its meaning. (78)

The only biological exigency that supports the notion that a parent must die before his/her child is their relative age, assuming that both live a full, natural lifespan without suffering accident or disease beforehand. The death of a child before the parent does not actually fly in the face of history, which is replete with examples of the contrary, nor do "cause and effect" or basic physics play any role in controlling the order in which parent and child perish. Here, Billy appeals to natural laws in general as a way of experiencing the inviolability he had attributed to the *belief* that the parent *should* die before the child. That belief, however, is based on nothing more than the desire to see it so, and the desire to feel secure against such tragic loss.

Billy's prior trauma has not prepared him for this moment of loss. Although the abandonment by his father and, most particularly, his experience in combat in Vietnam have provided Billy an experience of loss and death, those prior experiences have also

symbolized such loss in a particular way. An acceptance that soldiers may die in combat does not extend to a firm conviction that one's children may die. Billy's expectations of the scene of the disaster are prefigured by the specifics of combat, and the scene of the bus accident violates expectations that Billy has derives from his previous exposure to sudden and meaningless death. This new experience of sudden death is, in the most literal sense, signified incorrectly:

> Of course, I thought of Vietnam, but nothing I had seen or felt in Vietnam had prepared me for this. There was no fire and smoke or explosive noise, no wild shouts and frightened screams; instead, there was silence, broken ice, snow, and men and women moving with abject slowness: there was death, and it was everywhere on the planet and it was natural and forever; not just dying, perversely here and merely now. (67)

If symbolized meaning can be said to be shared even among the various parents in the town, each of whom ostensibly shares in this tragedy of loosing his or her children in the same bus accident, then what is shared is nothing more than the total breakdown of meaning. None of the townspeople are able to negotiate the abrupt invalidation of meaning. This is poignantly illustrated as outsiders (first reporters, and later, litigators) demand a discourse of them:

> There was even a TV camera crew from the NBC affiliate in Plattsburgh on the scene, headed by a blond woman in tights and leg warmers and a leather miniskirt who kept shoving her

> microphone at people's gray faces, asking them what they were feeling. As if they could say. (67)

That scanty experience of mutual speechlessness is not enough to bind one tragedy victim to another. The traumatic experience evoked by the bus accident and the death of their children is unique to each individual involved, as we have seen illustrated in the highly individualized accounts first by Dolores Driscoll, and now of Billy Ansel. The differences among the individual testimonies shows the impossibility of defining trauma by the event and that it is the experience, not the event, that shapes that crisis. That experience itself will be shaped by prior experience and the formation of the organizational domains in response to that prior experience. Although the accident as a significant event ostensibly 'shared' by many individuals, the comprehensive revision of Idiolect in response to traumatic experience undermines the basis for shared communication, severing the linguistic bond that had existed prior to the accident. Billy finds it impossible to communicate even with Risa, with whom he had shared a prior, intimate connection, and who, like Billy himself, has lost her child in the accident:

> We tried for a few moments to talk the way we used to, the way people who live each other are supposed to talk – intimately, more or less honestly, about their feelings for one another and for other people as well. We tried to talk not as if nothing had happened, of course, but with the accident and the loss of the children as a context. It was useless. I couldn't say anything true about how I felt, and neither could she. (86)

Billy is consciously aware that the precipitating event – the school bus crash – has alienated the citizens of Sam Dent from one another. Absorbed by the traumatic experience around which a new symbolized domain will form, and essentially expelled from prior symbolized meaning, Billy finds even Risa strange and unrecognizable, frozen in that single traumatic experience held in the nascent Idiolect as though in a newsreel of the event. His familiarity with her, held in a symbolized domain that is now inadequate, is as invalid as any other expression of meaning in invalidated Idiolect:

> And when I saw Risa Walker standing among the others up there by the road, it was as if I were seeing her for the first time in my life – as if seeing her on newsreel footage, a woman from the village who had lost her son, a mother who had lost her only child. She was like a stranger to me then, a stranger whose life had just been made utterly meaningless. I know this because I felt the same way. Meaning had gone wholly and in one clot out of my life too, and as a result I'm sure I was like a stranger to her as well. Our individual pain was so great that we could not recognize any other. (68)

Prior Idiolect is relegated to a Narrative domain, where it is no more or less valid than other Idiolectic domains invalidated by prior traumatic experience. This equilateral placement of various Narrative domains (including former articulations of Idiolect) creates a potential for slippage among them. As Billy walks away from the site of the accident, he returns not to that symbolized domain that immediately preceded the

accident – a domain in which a part of his subjective identity was his role as Risa's clandestine lover. Instead, he returns to that symbolized domain that was displaced at the death of his wife, Lydia – a domain in which subjectivity included his role as the husband of the woman who would most closely share his experience of loss – the mother of his children. No fully formed, dominant Idiolect exists as yet that can constrain his return to that much earlier symbolized domain, and Billy goes back to that domain with the intention of integrating the accident into it:

> I don't know where I was going, whom I was looking for. Yes, I do know. Lydia. I was looking for Lydia – to tell her that our children were dead, and that I had not been able to save them, and that finally we were all four of us together again. (69)

That Idiolectic domain that was supplanted at Lydia's death can no more accommodate the heterogeneous experience of the accident than can the Idiolect as it existed just prior to the accident. In the void that is created when current Idiolect is invalidated and no new Idiolect is as yet adequately formed to replace it, however, the only meaning available to Billy or any of the citizens of Sam Dent affected by the accident will be in an individually held Narrative domain, unshared among them. Each of the individuals affected, in essence, disappears into his or her own reality – whatever Narrative domain is available, whether it be the Idiolectic domain just invalidated and rendered a Narrative, or whether it be a symbolized domain formed and invalidated even earlier:

> The snow continued to fall, and from the perspective of Risa and the others back at the accident site, I must have disappeared into it, just walked straight out of their reality into my own. In a few moments I was utterly alone in the cold snowy world, walking steadily away from everyone else, moving as fast as I could, towards my children and my wife. (72)

Meaning is perceived to be lost or annulled when Idiolect cannot be modified to accommodate heterogeneous experience rapidly enough, or when such experience is so extrinsic to Idiolect that a wholly new and reconstituted field of symbolized meaning must be created. Idiolect supports the essential agenda of maintaining a perception that symbolized meaning correlates with an extrinsic, objective "reality." It does so by preventing the unconstrained and abrupt modification of its terms and relations. This conservatism regarding modification of Idiolect derives from by the necessity that the individual's apprehension of reality should remain, to a large degree, comprehensible to others in the domain of shared signification – the Communicative domain. An experience becomes traumatic when it demands a modification of Idiolect (and accordingly, of the other organizational domains) that is either so abrupt, or so essential to the core of those domains' structure that it disrupts the perception of an adequate correlation between external "reality" and the individual's apprehension of reality. Meaning, in other words, is not derived from the terms of symbolized meaning, but rather, from the deictic bond between the signifier and the signified.

The loss of meaning that follows traumatic crisis does not occur because a term or terms are lacking in Idiolect, but because the deictic bond between signified and signifier is severed (as we saw in *Traumnovelle*). Traumatic experience is experience that generates an acute conscious awareness that the signifier is arbitrary, determined by prior experience and *not* by its reflection of a stable, external reality. Once the assumption has been destroyed that one's apprehension of reality and a stable and external reality are equivalent, the stability of symbolized cognition is lost, and all meaning and identity are called into question. That disruption does not affect Idiolect alone, however, but carries back to the preceding domains, in particular the Ethical domain with its separation of Self from Other. The Communicative domain, too, will be implicated as the individual's apprehension of meaning can no longer be adequately mirrored by shared signification. Eventually, shared signification itself may even be modified by the heterogeneous experience of the individual if that individual can be successfully assert that experience in the Communicative domain and if a social consensus can be reached in that collectively authored domain.

In the case of the bus accident and the death of Billy's children, instability in the Ethical domain – the distinction between Self and Other – is manifested as the invasion of death into life. Death being profoundly Other in human experience, as well as one of the most basic distinction that defines the boundaries of Self, ambiguity in the distinction between life and death demonstrates the enormous degree of change demanded of the semiotic current by the accident. Subjectivity that had been defined in its relationship with those who are dead – in Billy's case, his active role as the father of Jessica and

Mason – can only be retained if the death of those individuals is denied (i.e. if they are signified as being alive), or if Self is defined as being dead (i.e., what was Other becomes Self, and what was Self becomes Other). Billy retains subjectivity that has been invalidated by the children's deaths, holding it in a Narrative domain. He is subsequently able to dwell in that Narrative only by perceiving himself to occupy the same ontological category as his children – that is, by perceiving himself to be likewise dead, sharing the same existential condition as his children:

> For a long time that's how it was for me; perhaps it still is. The only way I could go on living was to believe that I was not living. I can't explain it; I can only tell you how it felt. (72)

As Billy and the other townspeople each struggle to reconstitute an adequate apprehension of symbolized meaning – a new Idiolect formed around the changes brought about by the accident – they occupy that gap between symbolized fields, a "purgatory" (see also 2.1) in which it is easier to reside in the invalidated symbolized domain as Other (dead), than it is to inhabit the skeletal beginnings of nascent meaning as Self (alive):

> […] for us there was life, true life, real life, no matter how bad it had seemed, before the accident, and nothing that came after the accident resembled it in any important way. So for us, it was as if we, too, had died when the bus went over the embankment, and now we were lodged temporarily in a kind of purgatory, waiting to be moved to wherever the other dead ones had gone. (73)

It is simply easier to accommodate the semiotic current in such a way that somatosensory experience in the Epistemic is passed to the Ethical by reversing Self and Other. The semiotic current is then passed from that falsified apprehension of Self, to a Narrative domain that only a short time before had been an adequate apprehension of meaning and into which all prior experience has been ordered. In that domain, those who are dead still exist, together with subjective identity which, for logical purposes, is also defined as dead, i.e. as inhabiting the same ontological plain as loved ones who have perished. Newly forming Idiolect cannot accommodate that current until experience has been adequately symbolized by negotiating the relationship of all other instances of symbolized meaning to the accident and the "reality" that follows it. Until that occurs, nascent Idiolect, while apparently more valid, remains experientially less real:

> For a moment I stood at the side of the bus, looking up at the windows; and then I heard the children inside. Their voices were faint, but I could hear them clearly. They were alive and happy, going to school, and Dolores was moving through the gears, driving the bus up hill and down, cheerfully doing her duty; and I longed to join them, felt a deep aching desire to be with them, the first clear emotion I had felt since the accident; […] I wanted to be with them in death, with my own children, yes, but with all of them, for they seemed at that moment so much more believable than I myself was, so much more alive. (81-82)

A newly formed apprehension of "reality" – Idiolect – will assert its ascendancy primarily in the wake of undeniable fact (i.e. the subsequent absence of the children), but will also be supported and fostered by the Communicative domain. The accident as an element belonging to an objective, external "reality" will be established by the consensus of the larger discursive community. The first social entities to do so will include members of the press, and those not centrally affected by the precipitating event:

> […] several troopers wearing fluorescent orange jackets stood out in the middle of the road directing traffic, hurrying onlookers – skiers mostly, up for the weekend, delighted by the new snow, slowed suddenly and properly sobered by the sight of our town's disaster, memorizing as much of it as they could, so as to confirm it to their friends later, when it appeared in the newspapers and on television – past the scene and on to their weekend. (71)

These individuals, who do not have to modify their apprehension of subjective identity to accommodate a personal tragic loss, will be the first to form a symbolized apprehension of the accident, thereby establishing its symbolized value in the larger Communicative domain that exists outside of the town itself. The town, in turn, as a discursive community unto itself, will form an apprehension of symbolized meaning in response to the tragedy that is distinct from that larger discourse, creating a collective response to their loss. That response will serve the needs of a community more closely affected by the tragedy. I will examine the various collective responses to trauma in the next chapter of this study.

There are various means of coping with traumatic experience and managing the purgatorial gap that open up when the field of symbolized meaning is in transition. We saw Dolores Driscoll's efforts to manage the succession of symbolized meaning in relation to the trauma of loosing her connection to her sons (in essence, "loosing" her children), as well as in the way she manages to hold on to dissociated subjectivity using *projection* (i.e. her use of Abbott's incomprehensible speech to smuggle in her own "wise" voice). Projection is a means of *integrating* prior meaning into current Idiolect by expressing conflicted aspects of subjectivity as belonging to an entity that is ontologically distinct from oneself. Billy, on the other hand, tends to compartmentalize conflicted meaning, rejecting the integration of prior meaning into current Idiolect for extended periods of time and moving among conflicted symbolized domains as within a topography. Billy deals with the loss of meaning in the wake of the accident by holding onto competing symbolized domains in their entirety, and within them, invalidated (foreclosed) identities that articulate valid subjectivity. He neither merges nor separates those symbolized domains, unable to let go of what the accident has annulled:

> Nights now I can sit in my living room alone, looking at the glass of the picture window, with the reflection of my body and the drink in my hand and the chair and lamp beside me glaring flat and white back at me, and I am in no way as real in that room as I am in my memories of my wife and children. Sometimes it's not as if they have died so much as that I myself have died and have become a ghost. You might think that remembering those moments

> is a way of keeping my family alive, but it's not: it's a way of keeping myself alive. Just as you might think my drinking is a way to numb the pain; it's not; it's a way to feel the pain. (43)

His use of alcohol now and his use of marijuana both during and after Vietnam (until that use nearly causes the loss of his daughter), enables him to occupy the middle space between invalidated and newly formed meaning and identity. That manipulation of consciousness allows invalidated meaning to be raised to a level of a concurrent reality that can compete with Idiolect:

> With marijuana, your inner life and outer life merge and comfort each other. With alcohol, too, they merge, but they tend to beat up on you instead, and I didn't particularly like getting beat up on. (46)

Billy's need to preserve competing symbolized domains as neither merged with nor separated from one another brings him into conflict with other members of his discursive community, effectively isolating him. He actively rejects the means by which others attempt to integrate prior meaning with meaning after the accident. One of those methods – what Billy terms the "Christian view" – endeavors to unify life and death with one another by nullifying the validity of death, placing life and death within a single continuum in which life leads, not to death, but to life everlasting. Those townspeople who embrace this Christian solution recover the most quickly from their traumatic crisis, as both Billy and Dolores observe. That "Christian view" does not work for Billy,

however. Having been abandoned by his father, Billy perceives his ability to trust in an all-powerful and protective father to have been fundamentally damaged:

> We didn't have available to us the various means that many of our neighbors and relatives had for easing the blow. At least I didn't. The Christians' talk about God's will and all – that only made me angry, although I suppose I am glad that they were able to comfort themselves with such talk. […]It was enough to have listened to Reverend Dreiser at the twins' funeral. He wanted us all to believe that God was like a father who had taken our children for himself. Some father.
>
> The only father I had known was the one who had abandoned his children to others. (73)

Billy's later experiences in Vietnam, where death was all pervasive, random and seemingly inescapable, do not allow him to deny what he sees as being the reality of death in the face of Christian denial:

> But when I was nineteen and went to Vietnam, I was still young enough to learn something new, and the new thing was all this dying that I saw going on around me. Consequently, when I came home from Vietnam, I couldn't take the Christian line seriously enough even to bother arguing with it. (79)

Ultimately, the death of his children places him in diametric opposition to the "Christian view." Rather than an endless continuum of life, Billy's repeated experiences of loss and

death (his father, Vietnam, his wife, and finally his children) lead him to believe only in an endless continuum of death:

> [After Lydia's death] I still believed in life, however – that it goes on, in spite of death. I had my children, after all, and Risa. But four years later, when my son and daughter and so many other children of this town were killed in the accident, I could no longer believe even in life. Which meant that I had come to be the reverse, the opposite, of a Christian. For me, the only reality was death. (80)

Even more abhorrent in Billy's eyes than the "Christian view" of the accident is the attempt to juristically establish blame as a means of dealing with trauma. If religion represents, for him, a *desperate* attempt to give meaning to the meaningless, the juristic approach represents the "*sly*" approach – a disingenuous effort to restore causality, and with it, predictability and the capacity to limit or at least predict tragedy:

> Desperately, we struggled to arrange the event in our minds so that it made sense. Each of us in his own way went to the bottom and top of his understanding in search of a believable explanation, trying to escape this huge black nothingness that threatened to swallow our world whole. I guess the Christians in town, and there are a lot of them, got there first, […] To me, the religious explanation was just another sly denial of the facts. Not as sly, maybe, as insisting that the accident was actually not an accident,

> that someone – Dolores, the town, the state, someone – had caused it; but a denial nonetheless. (79)

By establishing blame, the perpetrator can be expelled from the community, thereby creating a perception that such tragedy can be prevented from reoccurring in the future. A *cause* for the tragedy can be established (whether that cause be inattentiveness, reckless driving habits, or even a pernicious disregard for safety in the face of greater profits). This juristic approach – which need not take the form of legal prosecution, but instead may simply be formulated as an ethical judgment – serves the common interest as much, if not more, than the interests of the individual by enlisting the traumatic experience of the individual or individuals to strengthen the boundaries of *social identity*.

In a social discourse on trauma, the perpetrator(s), as the assumed cause of the traumatic experience, can be expelled using some form of social sanctioning. In this way, the Self of the community (i.e. social identity) can be "protected from the cause of heterogeneous experience. That expulsion may entail incarceration or pecuniary sanctions, and/or it may take the form of social exclusion such as that which Dolores suffers. Such sanctions define the perpetrator or cause of the tragedy to be "bad," "evil," "not human like us," or in some other way Other – outside the defined boundaries of that which conforms with social identity. This expulsion according to ethical criteria serves the greater social objective of ensuring the cohesion of shared social identity, which by its very nature is a *reductive identity*. Social identity is a collective identity that is delimited by what is perceived to be most strongly shared by the participants of the discursive community that defines it (and that, in turn, is defined by it). Its purpose,

therefore, is to promote that which strengthens the social bond, and prohibit that which weakens it, whereby the very act of prohibiting that which is heterogeneous strengthens shared, social identity.

The integrity of social identity is not only threatened by the actions of the perpetrator (such as one exists). It is threatened by the individual nature of experience and the unique contribution of each of that community's participants, which introduces heterogeneous discourse into that Communicative domain, and which therefore acts centrifugally on social identity, driving that identity apart. Heterogeneous discourse is countered in the discursive community by discourse that emphasizes *centripetal* contributions, which help to strengthen that identity. Such centripetal discourse includes an ethical treatment of trauma, which emphasizes causality, and which optimally identifies a perpetrator or perpetrator class among society, thereby allowing the expulsion or sanction of that perpetrator. This treatment of trauma, (an ethical and even juristic treatment) proposes to eliminate the "cause" of heterogeneous discourse, making trauma something that *did* happen, but that *should* not happen, and that therefore that *will* not happen in the future.

An ethical treatment of traumatic crisis aids in the maintenance of social identity, thereby managing and reducing *social* trauma. (This social benefit to addressing the ethical aspects of traumatic experience accounts for the widespread focus in both in the treatment, and in the theoretical understanding of trauma. These approaches tend to emphasize the traumatic crisis that affects not only the victim, but the researcher and therapist as well – shared social trauma.) This ethical approach – essentially an

epistemological approach – is not without benefit to the individual, since every individual is a social being as well as an experiencing being. In particular, that approach facilitates the reconstitution of an adequate Idiolect, which is governed by predicate logic, and which therefore looks for causality as a means of ordering its contents. In order to appeal to causality and an ethical resolution to trauma, however, the individual must sacrifice his or her individual experience of the meaninglessness of the traumatic experience (i.e. the way in which that experience nullifies all meaning as the *basis* for trauma). This simplifying, juristic solution is an anathema to Billy Ansel, whose own natural tendency is to compartmentalize conflicted meaning, thereby preserving it intact. Billy's strategy of compartmentalization represents an individual, epistemic approach to trauma aimed more at accommodating all somatosensory experience, however contradictory, than in reinforcing the social bond. (I will examine the ethical approach to trauma in greater detail in the next chapter.)

Billy is as yet unaware of how he should resolve his traumatic crisis however he rejects the notion that what is needed is a legal judgment, a negligence suit, or representation by a lawyer. In addition, he also rejects those who claim *prescience* of the accident. Claims of prescience represent an attempt to *pre-signify* the accident by revising prior Idiolect, identifying the presence of heterogeneous experience (the accident) in the prior, now invalidated symbolized domain as having been present, if unrecognized. This attempt to claim, in retrospect, that one had known a tragedy was about to occur or that one had "seen it coming" are merely a variation of the juristic attempt to *integrate* the accident

into the existent symbolized domain, not by affixing blame necessarily, but by denying that it violated expectation. As Billy observes:

> It's a way of living with a tragedy, I guess, to claim after it happens that you saw it coming, as if somehow you had already made the necessary adjustments beforehand. I could understand that. But it irritated me to hear it, especially with so many journalists poking a microphone in people's faces and with all the downstate lawyers crawling across looking for someone to blame, so I want to say right out front that I was the person closest to the accident and I never saw it coming. (38-39)

This version of events does not satisfy Billy, whose traumatic experience is focused precisely on the unpredictability and the meaninglessness of the tragedy. It is here that we can see how Billy and Risa's conception of reality are fundamentally different after the accident, and this is what ultimately droves them apart. Naturally unable to recognize the artifice in his own compensatory mechanisms, Billy is able to readily identifies Risa's falsifying attempt to invest her prior, unrelated misery in the accident as though that misery were merely an extension of the tragedy. (This reinterpretation of already existent unhappiness may also represent an attempt to purge that unhappiness by attaching it to an event that is now complete):

> That's how Risa thinks, however, and she believes it, poor woman – she actually believes that she saw it all coming. Before the accident, for several years, mainly due to her collapsed marriage and numerous financial problems, she was merely a woman depressed and troubled; but that's what she thinks of now

> as prescience. Which is like writing history backwards, if you ask me, fixing the past to fit the present. Hindsight made over into foresight.
>
> "Oh, I knew it, Billy," she told me after the accident, when we finally could speak of it to each other. "I knew for the longest time, I knew something terrible was coming down. When I heard the sirens and the alarm from the firehouse, nobody had to tell me that something terrible had happened, that something unimaginable had been visited on me and Wendell, and on you, too, and on the entire town. I knew it instantly, because I had known for months that it was coming. That was why all those months, all the time we were meeting each other, in fact, I was so unhappy and turbulent in my emotions." (56)

Billy's rejection not only of Risa's claim of prescience, but also ultimately of Risa herself, serves a pragmatic function. It essentially allows him to continue to hold conflicted symbolized domains intact and compartmentalized just as he had done with conflicted meaning and identity in response to later traumata. Billy chooses a "solution" that asserts an individual, epistemic view that individual experience exceeds what can be expressed symbolically and shared in a single field of symbolized meaning. He rejects all ethical arguments that attempt to rehabilitate meaning and restore the social bond. Instead, as the reader discovers in the novel's final chapter, Billy will choose to isolate

himself socially, using alcohol to allow him to move between various symbolized domains – i.e. various, competing realities.

Billy's relationship with Risa comes to an end when he realizes that they no longer share a viable apprehension of meaning. That relationship had also served to create a space in which Billy could cautiously allow conflicted identity and meaning to unite, coexisting in an uneasy alliance (see above). With the renewed imperative to preserve prior symbolized meaning unmingled with new, heterogeneous experience, Billy retreats into a more compartmentalized existence, as he did after Vietnam and after the death of his wife. (We witnessed this retreat into compartmentalization in the vehement return of the "self-contained and courageous hero" at the scene of the accident and afterwards). Conflicted both by the proximity of the relationship to the actual moment of the accident (via his fantasy as he drove behind the bus), and with the compartmentalization of meaning and identity that is threatened by Risa's claims of prescience and her engagement of a lawyer (an attempt at integration), Billy rejects Risa. In so doing, he effectively dissolves the discursive community established by that relationship:

> Risa actually said that to me [that she saw the accident coming]. And when it did, it turned me off, but there was a time when that particular cast to her mind, the superstitious part of it, you might say, made her appear wonderfully attractive to me. After the accident, however, it made her seem stupid and weak, and it embarrassed me to find myself talking so intimately with her. (56)

He goes farther than simply breaking off that relationship, no longer interested in the integrative function it had served. He even denies the prior validity of that relationship in retrospect. In this way, he invalidates the relationship from the symbolized domain he seeks to preserve intact (Idiolect invalidated by the accident), and at the same time, purges the awareness that conflicted meaning and identity can be integrated, as they were in that relationship.

> But it was a lie, and I think we both knew it. I surely did. I still loved my wife, Lydia, and I don't think Risa loved anyone except her son, Sean. (40)

This rejection of prior meaning resembles, in some respects, Risa's own attempts to compensate for the traumatic disruption of meaning by reinterpreting prior meaning, using "hindsight made into foresight" (56). Like Risa, Billy alters prior signification using hindsight, but he does so by claiming the opposite of prescience. Instead, he claims an inability to see the future, or even to accurately perceive the present:

> I have the benefit of hindsight now, of course, and at the time maybe I half believe the tender words I whispered in her ear after we had made love […]. (40)

Ultimately, Billy simply cannot share a symbolized apprehension of meaning and identity with Risa Walker. Their individual tragedies, which we might expect to represent an overwhelmingly significant part of what they "share," are instead shaped by their own personal lifelong experiences and cannot be mingled. They have in essence become

"different people," as Billy describes it, no longer members of a common discursive community:

> I closed the door on her and walked away. We spoke again, of course, on numerous occasions, but always with other people surrounding us; we managed not to meet again in a room alone, however, or to speak face-to-face, and so it was as if we never saw each other after that, never saw the people we had once been, Risa Walker and Billy Ansel. From then on, we were simply different people. Not new people, different. (88)

Billy's rejection of Risa, and his rejection of the various "explanations" for the accident (whether religious, juristic, or the belated invocation of "prescience") constitutes a rejection of all efforts to integrate the prior symbolized field of meaning with the field evoked by heterogeneous experience. In so doing, he maintains competing fields of symbolized meaning (i.e. apprehensions of reality and identity) – an expression of trauma as an epistemic crisis. The individual experience of trauma *is* an epistemic crisis. For the individual, who builds his apprehension of reality (Idiolect) on unmediated somatosensory experience and the epistemic construction of Self in the Ethical domain, it is possible to reinterpret prior experience using a later formation of Idiolect, as we witness in those who later claim prescience. It is not possible, however, to modify the experience itself as it is held in an earlier temporal succession of Idiolect. This inability to modify experience inevitably leads to some degree of fragmentation of identity. Billy's earlier identity as Lydia's husband, for instance, together with his expectation that this

identity will persevere for an extended period of time, was made invalid by Lydia's death. By preserving that prior articulation of Idiolect, he is able to re-experience that expression of reality and identity by returning to that intact, symbolized domain (through the use of alcohol, marijuana, or merely through morbid rumination) that he has resisted integrating into Idiolect formed after her death. Likewise, the death of Jessica and Mason invalidates his identity as a father and violates the expectation that, in the natural order of things, he should die before his children.

Billy's resistance to the various means of integrating competing identity and competing symbolized domains dooms Billy to continually relive the pain of traumatic rupture and the loss of meaning that arises when competing apprehensions of reality are juxtaposed. This point of troubled intersection between preclusive "realities" where the silence of lost meaning occurs (the silence of trauma) is the point at which traumatic suffering first arises. Billy acknowledges this when he recognizes that it is not his children's lifeless bodies that cause grief, but the memory of them while alive:

> I had seen them myself, I looked straight down into their peaceful ice-blue faces, and then quickly drew the blankets over them again, turned and walked away alone, numb and solid as stone, and climbed slowly, on legs that weighed like lead, the steep side of the frozen embankment to the road. Photographs of them alive and smiling would have made me cry and fall down and beat the earth with my fists; their actual dead faces sealed me off from myself. (68-69)

Traumatic experience leads to traumatic crisis only after reflection, when the individual attempts to pass that experience to Idiolect (*narrative memory*) and comes to realize that neither apprehension of symbolized meaning and identity can be fully an accurate reflection of external reality. This accounts for the delay in the emergence of traumatic symptoms. Billy's recognition that competing realities are the origin of that suffering allows him to actually embrace that suffering, and he declares that he seeks it out. Alcohol, he explains, as a means of bringing together his inner life (invalidated meaning and identity) and outer life (meaning and identity after traumatic experience), provides him a way to remember, rather than a way to forget. As long as Billy feels the pain of that loss, prior symbolized meaning is preserved, and with it, his children and his active identity as their father.

Billy's compensatory strategy of maintaining previously invalidated fields of symbolized meaning is an expression of individual, epistemic trauma alone. He rejects all forms of ethical discourse in order to prevent the merging of competing Idiolects. An ethical approach to trauma attempts to establish causality, as well as transgression, while simultaneously seeking to exercise control over the transgressor and restore the integrity of symbolized meaning as shared signification. Such an approach leaves no room for the individual's experience of competing meaning and identity, which rests on an experience of ambiguity in the terms of symbolized meaning together with a fluctuation of Self and Other. As such, the ethical approach fulfills the social agenda of limiting heterogeneous contribution to social discourse, thereby defining a collective social identity in which

each individual can see themselves in part, and which preserves the community with a common linguistic bond.

Ethics, by its very nature, creates a basis for social identity, for mutual interaction, and for establishing whether the individual legitimately belongs (or does not belong) to the discursive community. Ethics, in other words, forms the inside/outside distinction of Self and Other for collective social identity. By declaring that basis to originate from a "universal" epoché *beyond* human cognition or human experience (i.e. outside the current of semiotic activity), prescriptive ethics establishes a common ground that allows the individual to compromise by denying or suppressing heterogeneous experience, and permitting the social agenda (which perforce is the agenda of the individual as social being) to assert itself against the imperative to accommodate his or her own individual experience.

The individual must fulfill two imperatives – the individual imperative to adequately accommodate all experience (an epistemic imperative driven by the unmediated nature of individual experience), and the social imperative to maintain the common social bond (an ethical imperative driven by the collective, and hence reductive, nature of shared signification and the need to maintain the linguistic bond of the communicative domain). These essentially competing traumatic processes (the first that strives to expand symbolized meaning and the second that strives to limit such expansion) work against one another as the individual is impelled to signify heterogeneous experience, but simultaneously impelled to preserve the common basis for communication in the discursive community. The epistemic discourse on trauma, in other

words, opposes the ethical discourse, even as both discourses validly express traumatic crisis as it is articulated in distinct domains within the *same* current of semiotic activity.

By working against one another, these two traumatic processes and their opposing demands play the greatest role in making trauma difficult to resolve, since we are both experiencing individual and social being. It makes the process of expressing trauma in language difficult, in other words, since the traumatized individual is impelled both to *redefine* what can be expressed, and to *limit* such redefinition. At the same time, that opposition serves the function of preserving language as both an expression of individual experience and the primary medium of social communication. The opposition of traumatic process – individual and social – does so by preventing an uncontrolled proliferation of discordant apprehensions of reality in the Idiolects of various individuals (a proliferation that would make social interaction impossible). Those opposing traumatic processes ensure that shared signification remains dynamic, potentially being altered by the individual if the "pressure of suffering" (*Leidensdruck*) created by heterogeneous experience is great enough to successfully challenge shared signification.

Billy is primarily driven by the individual imperative, expressing his trauma as an epistemic crisis that divides meaning and identity. He does so, however, at the cost of his active participation in the discursive community, preferring to withdraw from social contact rather than having to formulate an integrated apprehension of reality and identity that can be shared. In the remaining testimonies – those of Mitchell Stephens, Nicole Burnell, and ultimately, the second testimony of Dolores Driscoll (indirectly the testimony of Sam Dent as a collective entity) – will see other, more socially oriented

attempts to come to terms with traumatic crisis, and in particular, with the competing imperatives of individual and collective (social) trauma.

Chapter 5: Russell Banks's *The Sweet Hereafter*: Individual Trauma and Collective Trauma

> I could nearly witness the lurching of his brain. He needed words. He'd forgotten they existed. He had to energize his atmospheres and let words form, like clouds inside him. (Denis Johnson)[1]

5.0 Introduction

In the preceding chapter, I began examining Russell Banks's *The Sweet Hereafter*, a novel that depicts various reactions to a single "traumatic event." There, I looked at the first two of five individual accounts of that event, a fatal school bus accident, in order to demonstrate that the event itself does not determine the individual's traumatic crisis, but instead, serves as a precipitating factor for that crisis. The precise crisis suffered by each of the two individuals, Dolores Driscoll and Billy Ansel, is predicated on their underlying dispositions, their manner of involvement in the precipitating event, and their previous experiences, in particular, the kinds of traumatic experiences they have had. (Those previous traumatic experiences establish vulnerabilities in the structure of the organizational domains that shape the way in which the semiotic current is disrupted by renewed traumatic experience. In this way, although the school bus accident is at the heart of each individual narrative or "testimony," the traumatic crisis suffered by each of the novel's characters constitutes a *traumatic experience* that is unique to each. That experience is heterogeneous to the structure of each individual's organizational domains, and as it calls for a reanalysis of symbolized

[1] Denis Johnson, *Already Dead: A California Gothic* (New York: Harper Collins, 1997) 49.

meaning and identity, traumatic experience disrupts the semiotic current within the domains intrinsic to individual cognition – that is, the Epistemic, Ethical, Idiolectic and Narrative domains.

The narratives or accounts of traumatic experience that I will examine in this chapter will provide a glimpse into two more individual reactions to the accident, specifically, that of the negligence lawyer, Mitchell Stephens, and an eighth grader who survived the crash, Nicole Burnell. Finally, I will return to Dolores Driscoll's second narrative in which she presents the resolution she has achieved for her own traumatic crisis. Most significantly, however, Dolores Driscoll will offer a view of the overall strategy taken by the people of her town – the inhabitants of Sam Dent – to resolve the collective, social trauma brought about by the deaths of fourteen of the town's children. In a narrative style that differs markedly from her first testimony, Dolores will present an analysis of the way in which the social fabric is mended and the discursive community restored through the subtle shift in various townspeople's social roles, including Dolores's own.

While I will continue to address the individual trauma depicted in the remaining narratives (those of Mitchell Stephens, Nicole Burnell, and Dolores Driscoll), my analysis of those narratives will also focus on the negotiation of meaning in the last organizational domain – the Communicative domain. As the domain of social discourse, the Communicative domain that is unique both in that it arises through the collective agency of all participants in any given discursive community, *and* in that it is neither held nor apprehended by any individual. Rather, as the basis of mutual communication, it

arises through the interactions between individuals and, more specifically, their mirroring of one another – mirroring that serves to reflect the perceived adequacy or inadequacy of each individual's apprehension of meaning and identity. In this chapter, I will examine the tension between individual trauma – a disruption of meaning and identity that occurs when subjectivity and experience cannot be passed along via the semiotic current – and collective trauma – a disruption that occurs when individuals attempt to pass heterogeneous experience to the Communicative domain, thereby disrupting shared social identity and the basis for mutual communication.

Those two traumatic processes that fragment identity, the individual traumatic process that demands the *expansion* what can be expressed, the social traumatic process that demands the *restriction* of what can be expressed, are diametrically opposed to one another, each blocking the other's attempts at resolution. At the same time, since each individual is both an experiencing being *and* a social being, she will have to find some way to mediate between both the individual traumatic process and the social traumatic process. Ultimately, the difficulty of negotiating and balancing the objectives of these two competing traumatic processes such that both are adequately satisfied that makes "traumatic crisis" so resistant to resolution. The term, "traumatic crisis" itself is actually a catch-all phrase designating these two unique crises. The stalemate between the desire to renegotiate meaning and the need to preserve shared meaning may carry on for an extended period of time, delaying the process of signification. As a result, sub-processes that make up the larger process of signification may be attenuated, giving rise to what are defined as the "symptoms" of traumatic crisis. Rather than a pathological breakdown,

however, traumatic crisis provides the impetus that pushes the individual to challenge core aspects of shared signification, overcoming the inertia of the collectively defined Communicative domain. It is this crisis-driven capacity to challenge "meaning" in shared discourse that ensures that meaning will continue to evolve and that semiotic current (a current that itself *is* subjectivity) will endure.

5.1 Expectation and the Formation of Meaning: Ethics and Experience

The account given by Mitchell Stephens Esq. constitutes the only narrative in which the perspective is that of an outsider to the town of Sam Dent. Mitchell Stephens is a negligence lawyer – an "ambulance chaser" in common parlance – who comes from New York City having never visited as remote a location in upstate New York. Acting on leads that he finds in the news, Mitchell Stephens travels to the scene for accidents like the school bus crash in Sam Dent hoping to instigate a suit on behalf of the victims and their families with, as we will see, no real interest in actual culpability, and with no real concern for the victims. As such, Mitchell Stephens is not only an outsider to the tragedy in Sam Dent, he is a particularly callous outsider, jaded by repeated exposure to such disasters. His focus is exclusively on manipulating the law, the emotionally vulnerable victims, and the stricken communities in order to achieve his own self-serving ends, which are both pecuniary and personal.

Mitchell Stephens's interest in the school bus accident is not philanthropic and yet, his relationship to that and similar events is indeed determined by his own prior experiences, in particular, traumatic experience. Like Dolores Driscoll and Billy Ansel,

Mitchell too has lost his child, a daughter named Zoe, who has become firmly entrenched in a self-destructive lifestyle of drugs, prostitution, and petty crime. Like those previous testimonies as well, Mitchell's testimony focuses to a large extent in an underlying traumatic fissure that drives his behavior; most particularly his behavior as a litigation lawyer who prosecutes negligence suits. Mitchell transfers the rage, helplessness and frustration he feels in his private life to this kind of litigation, specifically seeking out accidents that involve the deaths of children. In so doing, he is able to act out the "solution" he fruitlessly seeks for his conflicted relationship with his daughter, as well as for her deteriorating condition, by seeking "retribution" for the loss that he has suffered. His career, in other words, has taken a form that acts as a compensatory mechanism for his own trauma:

> But anytime I hear about a case like that school bus disaster up there, I turn into a heat seeking missile, homing in on a target that I know in my bones is going to turn out to be some bungling corrupt state agency or some multinational corporation that's cost-accounted the difference between a ten-cent bolt and a million-dollar out-of-court settlement and has decided to sacrifice a few lives for the difference. (91)

Mitchell's pursuit of such "negligence" litigation serves as a "socially acceptable" outlet for his rage –one that he hopes will alleviate the pressure created by his frustration over his daughter. It is this, rather than the monetary rewards, that Mitchell claims drives him

to prosecute these cases; unabashedly acknowledging the absence of any philanthropic impulse:

> But the truth is, the good ones, we'd make the same moves for a single shekel as for a ten-million-dollar settlement. Because it's anger that drives us and delivers us. It's not any kind of love, either – love for the underdog or the victim, or whatever you want to call them. Some litigators like to claim that. The losers.
>
> No, what it is, we're permanently pissed off, the winners, and practicing law is a way to be socially useful at the same time, that's all. It's like a discipline; it organizes and controls us; probably keeps us from being homicidal. (90)

In order to understand Mitchell Stephens's involvement in the tragedy in Sam Dent, it is first necessary to understand the situation with his daughter. Unlike the tragedies over which he instigates litigation, the tragedy with which Mitchell must come to terms – the loss of his daughter – has not yet really occurred. Whatever he does on Zoe's behalf in an effort to save her, those efforts come to naught, and Mitchell is left with an ever increasing sense of helplessness, his untried options dwindling:

> I've done everything the loving father of a whacked-out drug-addicted child is supposed to do. I've even done a Rambo and kicked a few doors off their jambs and dragged Zoe out of filthy rat-infested apartments, garbage heaps with satanic altars lit by candles in a goat's skull on a TV in a corner; I've locked her up in

> rehab hospitals, halfway houses and the Michigan farms of understanding relatives. Two weeks later, she's back on the streets. New York, Pittsburg, Seattle, L.A. The next time I hear from her, it's a phone call scamming for money, money supposedly for school or a new kind of therapist who specializes in macrobiotic drug treatment or, sobbing with shame and need, a plane ticket home (that's usually the one that gets me). I send money, hundreds, thousands of dollars; and she's gone again. A month or two later, she's calling from Santa Fe – same scam, same format, […]. By now, of course, I realize that if I don't send money, she'll raise it some other way, dealing drugs or pornography or even hooking. It's like I'm in the position of having to buy her clean needles to protect her against AIDS. Forget protecting her against the drugs. Forget healing her mind. (100-101)

Mitchell anticipates a tragic outcome to Zoe's gradual but unstoppable decline however the onset of disaster is so protracted – extending over many years – that he cannot even begin the process of coming to terms with his trauma. If we were to compare his tragedy with that of the school bus crash, it is as though Mitchell were trapped in the moment when the bus went off of the road, but is still waiting endlessly for the crash that has yet to come. His efforts to accept the inevitable are repeatedly annulled and he goes through the grief process again and again, only to have Zoe call and remind him that his grief is premature:

> "Daddy, it's me!" she said. Her voice was full of the usual phony enthusiasm, but it was dead, dead as the kids in their caskets.
>
> "Zoe! Jesus!" I'd been shaving, and I snapped off my electric razor and sat down on the bed. It was like getting a call from a ghost. Every time I think my period of mourning is over, she calls to remind me that I haven't really started yet. (140)

There is a tragic ambivalence and in Mitchell's reaction to those calls, since he is at once relieved that she is still alive, and at the same time grieved both by the inevitability of her self-destruction and his inability to put his grief behind him. Thus, in an echo of Billy Ansel's assertion that he "blamed love" for his family's suffering (i.e. his own), Mitchell is himself trapped by his love of his daughter and his inability to let go of what he sees as his responsibility as Zoe's father:

> I've told my story -- it's a compulsion, I guess – to friends and strangers and even to shrinks, all of whom feel sorry for me, if you can believe that, which is a way of feeling sorry for themselves, I've learned; I've attended Al-Anon meetings and ToughLove workshops for parents and spouses of addicts, where they promote a kind of spiritual triage ("Mitch, chill out, man, you've got to learn to separate from your child," they say, while you watch her drowning before your eyes); […]. (100)

In this sense, part of Mitchell Stephens's attraction to those tragic accidents in which children perish may be derived from a desire to act out the revenge for the child's loss, but equally reflects what must seem the almost enviable *conclusion* of the tragedies over which he instigates litigation. In those cases, the full horror of the outcome has been revealed and all that is left is the process of coming to terms with the event and healing from the traumatic experience. For Mitchell Stephens, a significant part of his traumatic experience is the *expectation* of an abrupt rupture in meaning and identity, in which his active role and responsibility as father will be annulled, while at the same time, the inability to begin adjusting to those changes until the actual event of Zoe's death occurs. The Narrative domain in which that presumably inevitable event is pre-signified and held (as imagination) disrupts the asymmetry that preserves Idiolect's dominance, that Mitchell is aware, in other words, that this Narrative domain holds his *future* reality and identity (future Idiolect). Mitchell's deferred identity is not identity that is threatened with foreclosure, but instead it is identity that threatens to foreclose upon dominant, Idiolect-based identity. Knowing that this is the case does not prepare Mitchell for that moment of rupture, however. As Billy Ansel noted however, imagining your child's death does not truly adequately prepare one for that child's actual death.

Mitchell's relationship with Zoe is ambivalent for a number of reasons besides the incompletion of her tragic loss, and Mitchell's apprehension of both his and Zoe's identity is divided. On the one hand, Zoe remains, for him, the loving and trusting daughter she once was – an identity that emerges, albeit as a falsified persona, when Zoe calls to wheedle money out of him. At the same time, she has become a kind of

perpetrator in his eyes, playing on his love of her to manipulate him, trapping him in the endless suffering of a tragedy that has announced its eminent coming, but that is endlessly deferred:

> Five years of doing this, and what happens? You get pissed off – believe me, enough rage and helplessness, your love turns to steamy piss. Of course, long before Zoe dropped out of boarding school and hit the streets, I was pissed off – it's in my genes, practically – but she's succeeded in providing me with a nice sharp focus on it, so that, except when I'm burning myself out on something like the Sam Dent school bus case, I'm dizzy and incoherent, boiling over, obsessed, useless – mad. I'd rather be a cinder than a madman. But there's no way I'll let myself become a victim. (101-102)

In dealing with Zoe's intermittent calls, her crises and demands, Mitchell is plunged into his own world of horror and impending disaster. Between those calls, however, he occupies a reality in which he acts as a litigation lawyer – a reality in which he is uniquely capable of disimpassioned rationality and, ironically, able to slip in and out of various kinds of character as he, like Zoe, manipulates both others and the truth to achieve his own objectives. The phone calls represent moments in which the existence of that deferred but immanent post-traumatic modification of identity and meaning is thrust upon Mitchell's awareness, but from which he is able to recover, putting it out of his mind and compartmentalizing it:

> What do you do when this sort of thing happens? I'll tell you what you do. You sit still and count slowly to ten, or a hundred, or a thousand, however long it takes for your heart to stop pounding, and then you resume doing whatever it was you were doing when the telephone first rang. (141)

Mitchell Stephens's subjectivity is divided in a way that replicates Zoe's division – that is, he is both seductive and mercenary, placating his clients and, more significantly, Zoe, while he attempts to manipulate the situation to his own advantage. In he manages to seduce and hold both his clients and of his daughter, Zoe, with promises of money. In the case of his clients, he also seduces them with promises of that which he seeks for himself, revenge. The pecuniary rewards of pursuing such litigation, also works to Mitchell's benefit in terms of his own, personal objectives. He would not have the opportunity to try and help her, or the time to work out a lasting solution to prevent her self-destruction if he did not provide her with money. While he regrets the uses to which she puts the money he sends her, the fact that he has what she desires and needs allows him to maintain a connection with her, guaranteeing that more calls (both reassuring and terrible) will come.

Mitchell and his daughter are locked in a relationship of reciprocal seduction and manipulation – a relationship that has a certain "cut-throat," exploitive quality to it. Zoe attempts to seduce her father into giving her the money she needs for drugs, and Mitchell attempts to seduce his daughter with money in order to control her and keep her dependant on him while he works out a way to save her. The pattern for this relationship

was established early in Zoe's life, and it is exemplified by a critical incident that occurred while Zoe was still a toddler. While vacationing in a cottage in the remote Outer Banks, Zoe was bitten by an insect and suffered an acute, life-threatening allergic reaction. Miles from the nearest medical facility and with the only local physician unavailable, Mitchell watched in horror as Zoe's condition precipitously deteriorated:

> But when I saw her I was horrified – she was standing in the rented Portacrib; her red face sweating and swollen like a melon with a pathetic froglike smile sliced across it. I touched her bare shoulder gingerly: she was feverish, her skin as hot as I'd ever felt it. (121-122)

Calling the hospital in Elizabeth City, the physician on call was able to deduce the cause of the reaction and he provided Mitchell instructions on how to deal with the emergency as he and his family drove the forty miles inland to the hospital:

> Instantly, he surmised that there was a nest of baby black widow spiders in the crib mattress. "They have to be little babies, or else with her body weight she'd be dead," he said. […] "There is a good chance you can get her to me before her throat closes, and then we can control the swelling with insulin," he said. But keep her calm, he told me, don't excite her. (122)

There are two things that Mitchell must do to save Zoe's life as his wife, Klara, drives the car. He must keep Zoe calm in order to prevent the poison from spreading, which he does by singing to her, smiling and behaving as though everything is perfectly

fine. The second thing that Mitchell must be prepared to do, is to perform an emergency tracheotomy on his daughter should the swelling progress to the point that her breathing becomes completely obstructed. The doctor prepares Mitchell to perform the procedure as best he can over the phone:

> "Use the small blade," he said, and then he explained how to perform an emergency tracheotomy, told me how to cut into my daughter's throat and windpipe without causing her to bleed to death. "There will be a whole lot of blood, you understand. A whole lot." (123)

The dichotomy in Mitchell's role in this incident neatly sets up the dichotomous relationship that will bind Zoe and Mitchell later in life, although it almost certainly does not create it. Holding Zoe and singing to her about the "jolly sixpence" he has, he seduces the child into a calm and trusting state, while in his hand he conceals the knife with which he will perform the tracheotomy should it prove necessary:

> Throughout, I was neatly divided into two people – I was the sweetly easy daddy singing, "I've got sixpence, jolly, jolly sixpence, I've got sixpence to last me all my life," and I was the icy surgeon, one hand in his pocket holding the knife, blade open and ready, the decision to cut unquestioned now, irreversible, while I waited merely for the second that Zoe's breath stopped to make the first slice into her throat. (124)

The scene is chilling, and the experience was most certainly frightening – even traumatic – to Mitchell at the time it occurred; a time in his life before he knew how badly things would turn out for his little family, and in particular, for Zoe. In retrospect, however, with Zoe's gradual downward spiral into total self-destruction, Mitchell looks back on that experience with a feeling of exhilaration and power that he associates with the legal cases he prosecutes like the one in Sam Dent. The experience, in other words, is one in which there is a clear-cut solution, and in which the bifurcation of subjective identity is not only rational, it is reasonable. This incident prefigures Mitchell's later trauma, however it also precedes it. Unlike his present relationship with his daughter, in which he can seduce her with his "shiny sixpence" but in which there is no incisive action that can save her life, that earlier incident, together with his work as a lawyer, make him feel clear-headed, powerful, competent, and most importantly, in control of the ultimate outcome. He need only be prepared to act, and to go as far as necessary to ensure a positive outcome:

> I can't tell you why I connect that terrifying drive to Elizabeth City over two decades ago to this case in Sam Dent now, where children actually died, fourteen of them, but there is a powerful equivalence. With my knife in my hand and my child lying in my lap, smiling up at me, trusting me utterly, with her face swelling like a painted balloon, progressively distorting her features into grotesque versions of themselves, I felt the same clearheaded power that I felt during those first days in Sam Dent, when the suit

> was taking off. I felt no ambivalence, did no second-guessing, had no mistrusted motives – I knew what I did and what I would do next and why, and Lord, it felt wonderful! It always feels that way. Which is why I go on doing it. (124)

Mitchell finds it appealing to be in a position of controlling others using subtle manipulation as he orchestrates the outcome of disaster, particularly in contrast to the helplessness he feels with Zoe now that she is an adult. His work as a negligence lawyer – work that has literally made him into a "cut-throat lawyer" – functions, in this sense, as a compensatory mechanism. It allows Mitchell to act decisively, competently, holding his clients under his control and playing one against the other as he scripts the outcome of their disaster. In contrast to the tragedy of a daughter who is gradually destroying herself, and who is therefore both perpetrator and victim, negligence litigation allows Mitchell to assign culpability, "punishing" the "wrongdoers," and fabricating a fallacious belief that by doing so, they are preventing the recurrence of such tragedy. Mitchell places himself in the position of creating the social apprehension of the tragedies over which he sues – an act of nomothesis. At an even more subtle level, his role as lawyer allows Mitchell to feel he has averted disaster by his very decisiveness, frequently bringing his cases to a positive conclusion before they need go to trial (a long, drawn-out situation with an uncertain outcome much like that which he experiences in his relationship with Zoe now):

> In the case of the drive to Elizabeth City, as in so many of the suits I've since undertaken, it turned out that I did not need to go as far

> as I was prepared to go. But this is only because I was indeed prepared to go all the way. I was at peace with myself and the world, and consequently Zoe, too, stayed calm and placid, her tiny heart beating slowly, normally, […]. (124)

Zoe's behavior replicates Mitchell's behavior in a number of crucial ways that ultimately brings their basic characters into conflict with one another. It is as though in raising her, he had also trained Zoe to be his most skilled opponent – the one who might cause him to fail in his manufacture of the "truth." Just as Mitchell is driven to pursue negligence litigation by his own rage and need – motivations that he conceals under a suave and pleasing manner – so too does Zoe attempt to disguise her rage and anger beneath a patina of daughterly affection, using the father – daughter relationship as a façade for her manipulation:

> "Oh, Dad, hi. Hey, listen, I'm sorry about this morning, I was really bumming, and this damned phone is all fucked up…," blah blah blah, in a soft, accommodating voice that was all surface, a lid of sweetness and light over a cauldron of rage and need. (153)

Mitchell is aware of this deception, but he is not immune to it. Like his potential clients and witnesses, who are seduced by Mitchell's manipulation and the subtle alteration of his persona, Mitchell is fully cognoscente of his daughter's duplicity, however a part of him yields to that manipulation when she says what he wishes to hear. She, like Mitchell, seduces by promising the resolution of traumatic schism.

At the most obvious level of course, Zoe's core subjectivity is divided by her drug use. When she is high on drugs, her behavior is very different than it is when she is sober. Mitchell himself must then alter his own behavior in response to this variability, feeling that he cannot even know how to act unless he knows what state Zoe is in – whether high or sober:

> "Well, to be perfectly honest, right now I want to know if you're high."
>
> "You mean, Daddy, am I stoned? Do I have a needle dangling from my arm? Am I nodding in a phone booth? Did I score this morning, get whacked, Daddy, and call you for money?"
>
> Trees, snow, mountains, ice. I could hear sirens, street traffic, a radio or TV newscaster in the background. I imagined some boyfriend behind her, sick and dying, smoking a cigarette, waiting for her to raise some money from her rich father. Who was I talking to? The living or the dead? How should I behave?
>
> "God," she said. "I don't fucking believe it."
>
> "I'm sorry. I just need to know, if that's possible. So I can know how to talk to you. So I can know how to act." (140-141)

Zoe's level of sobriety creates a very real schism in her subjectivity as the degree of her cognitive impairment affects the terms and categories of rational thought (Idiolect). Mitchell's adjustment to accommodate fluctuations in Zoe's level of cognitive functioning might reflect a schism in his own subjectivity, but more likely, it may simply

be the expression of a projected persona, a manipulation of self-identity formed in a Narrative domain as a deliberate fabrication. On the other hand, Mitchell must deal with another division of his daughter's identity that exists within his own perceptions, touching on something deeper, and evoking articulations of subjectivity (both his own and Zoe's) that were annulled when his daughter became an adult and ceased to trust him. Together with an apprehension of his daughter's identity as a "whacked-out drug-addicted child" (100), Mitchell *remembers* his daughter as an innocent, trusting and loving child. That child, or the memory of that child – in essence the Zoe he seeks to save –exists side by side with the current "child" she has become; held in a field of meaning that had once been Idiolect, but that is now (partially) relegated, through traumatic experience, to a Narrative domain:

> Now in my dreams if her, and I dream of her frequently, Zoe is still that child in my lap, trusting me utterly – even though I am the man who secretly held in his hand the knife that he had decided to use to cut into her throat, and thus I am in no way the man she sees smiling down at her, singing ditties and rondelets and telling stories of owls and pussycats. (125)

This memory of his child as she once was establishes an emotional tie to the people he represents in the negligence suits he prosecutes, connecting him to them through his projected recognition of himself. In this way, those people also come to "represent" him. Although Mitchell professes that he has a stronger affinity with those parents who feel rage at the death of their child or children – a rage similar to that which

drives him to pursue these cases – in the twilight moment of awakening he sometimes sees himself in the "defeated" parents who simply grieve. Those parents, whose reaction to tragic loss is exemplified by Billy Ansel's reaction to the accident, still occupy a field of symbolized meaning in which they are still with their children; an Idiolect that has been invalidated, but that preceded the tragedy that took the child and that simultaneously destroyed meaning and identity:

> And sometimes when I wake, for a few moments I'm like Risa Walker and Hartley Otto and Billy Ansel and all those other parents whose children have died and who have been unable to react with rage – the dreamed child is the real one, the dead child simply does not exist. We waken and say, "I can't believe she exists." It's the other child, the dreamed baby, the remembered one, that for a few lovely moments we think exists. For those few moments, the first child, the real baby, the dead one, is not gone; she simply never was. (125-126)

Mitchell's attempt to represent the bereaved parents in Sam Dent is a part of his own compensatory mechanism that allows him to deal with his own trauma, bringing him into contact with communities that express his divided self – as both the victim who has suffered the loss of a child and who cannot let go of past meaning and identity, and as the enraged man of action capable of working against the insidious cause of that loss. In these communites of traumatized individuals, he finds examples of both; he finds victims in people like Billy Ansel and Hartley Otto, as well as those who are angry like Wanda

Hartley and the Walkers, however it is this later group that are useful to Mitchell in his litigation, and with whom he consciously relates. The rage that he lauds in them acts as a shield, allowing him to ward off the much more painful state he declares a sense of "victimization," but that is perhaps more accurately, described as a sense of useless loss:

> And I don't burn myself out with these awful cases because it somehow makes me a better person. No, I admit it, I'm on a personal vendetta; what the hell, it's obvious. And I don't need a shrink to tell me it's because I myself have lost a child and now identify with chumps like Risa and Wendell Walker and that poor sap Billy Ansel, and Wanda and Hartley Otto. The victims. Listen, identify with the victims and you become one yourself. Victims make lousy litigators. […] Simply, I do it because I'm pissed off, and that's what you get when you mix conviction with rage. It's a very special kind of anger, let's say. So I'm no victim. Victims get depressed and live in the there and then. I live in the here and now. (98-99)

The rage that Mitchell feels lends the tragedy of loosing a child a kind of purpose (a tragedy that he experiences by proxy as an articulation of his own loss, or the loss that he will eventually suffer when Zoe finally succumbs to her lifestyle). As Mitchell claims, it is both a means of taking revenge for the lost child on behalf of the bereaved parent, as well as a way of creating a future. The emphasis that Mitchell places on this perception that such litigation can ensure a future addresses his own particular traumatic dilemma. It

is a trauma in which the permanent loss of his daughter through her death has not yet occurred, and one in which he cannot allow himself to fall into grief like the parents who become "victims." Rather, he must continue to fight, however futile that effort might seem:

> And the best we can do for them, and for ourselves, is rage against what took them. Even if we can't know what it'll be like when the smoke clears, we do know that rage, for better or worse, generates a future. The victims are the ones who've given up on the future. Instead, they've joined the dead. And the rest, look at them: unless they're enraged and acting on it, they're useless, unconscious; they're dead themselves and don't even know it. (99-100)

Despite his obstinate clinging to the role of enraged "avenger" – the role of action, rather than helpless grief – Mitchell does indeed identify with the "victims" who remain in a twilight state of grief by clinging to meaning and identity that have been annulled by their tragic loss. That sense of identification occurs not only in those occasional first moments upon awakening, to which he admits. Rather, they occur suddenly and without prior warning, as when he stands outside of Billy Ansel's house at night, and sees Billy through the picture window, standing with a drink in his hand and lost in his memories of "before." Unsure whether Billy has seen him, Mitchell remains, caught in a moment of mutual recognition:

> Suddenly, he stood up and turned and faced out the window, looking across the snow-covered front yard right at me. I froze and

> stared back at him. Nothing else to do. I remember that for several seconds we seemed to be gazing at one another, me in the moonlight at the side of the road, him in the soft light of his kitchen a hundred feet away, neither of us moving a muscle. We were like mirror images of each other, […]. It was a weird moment, though. As if we were long-lost brothers, separated early and passing by accident decades later, not quite recognizing each other, but then, for a second or two, something – something – clicks. (132-133)

The "encounter", of which only Mitchell is aware, is significant, since it is Billy Ansel that he sees as embodying the epitome of the defeated and victimized reaction of a parent to tragic loss, (a reaction that Mitchell will eventually come to bank on for his suit):

> Then I recognized it: I've seen it a hundred times, but it still surprises and scares me. It's the opaque black-glass look of a man who has recently learned of the death of his child. It's the face of a person who's gone to the other side of life and is no longer even looking back at us. It always has the same history, that look: at the moment of the child's dying, the man follows his child into darkness, as if he's making a last attempt to save it; then, in panic, to be sure that he himself has not died as well, the man turns momentarily back towards us, maybe he even laughs then or says something weird, for he sees only darkness there too; and now he

> has returned to where his child first disappeared, fixing onto one of the bright apparitions that linger there. It's downright spooky. (104)

Seeing that reaction in Billy, Mitchell is made uneasy, in part because of the enormity of Billy's grief, but more particularly, because it is an expression of grief that Mitchell cannot allow himself if he is ever to save his daughter. Mitchell quite rightly perceives that that grieved state in which a person holds on to past meaning and identity is prohibitive of decisive action. Indeed, in seeking potential clients, Mitchell specifically rejects those parents who have fallen into a state of helpless grief, instead seeking out those who, like him, are driven to action by their rage:

> Usually, that's all you need. The angry partner carries the defeated partner, who hasn't the energy to argue against the idea of a suit, let alone the actuality, which of course, once it's underway, provides its own momentum. You do need one of them fueled by anger, however, especially in the beginning; two defeated parties tend to reinforce each other's lassitude and make lousy litigants. The attorney often ends up fighting his won clients, especially near the end, when it gets down to dealing out the last cards, and the out-of-court settlement offers get made and refused. (113)

Mitchell sublimates his anger, using it to generate the focus and forcefulness he will need to prosecute his case. Once he begins to pursue a case, the compensatory function of that litigation restores the clarity and control he felt before his own life went

out of control – in particular during the ride to the hospital in Elizabeth City with his trusting young daughter. Consequently, that experience, which had been so frightening at the time, takes on a halcyon quality that he seeks to replicate again and again:

> Nothing else provides me with the rush that I get from cases like this. There is a brilliant hard-edged clarity that comes over me when I take on a suit for the Ottos and the Walkers of the world, an intensity and focus that makes me feel more alive than at any other time. […] When I think about it, the only other event in my life that I can remember even coming close to giving me the same rush, the same hard hit of formalized intelligence, happened nearly twenty years ago, on the coast of North Carolina, when Zoe was two years old and we were renting a summer place way out on the Outer Banks. (120 - 121)

The choice to act out his traumatic crisis as a negligence litigator does more than make Mitchell feel capable. As I stated in the previous chapter when I examined Billy Ansel's reaction to the various means of coming to terms with tragedy, resolution can be sought by seeking culpability for a tragedy. That juristic, essentially ethical approach helps to formulate meaning in the wake of traumatic experience in a number of ways. It restores causality – a logical relationship that is undermined when apparently meaningless and unpredictable events such as the school bus accident occur. At the same time, it enables the community to exclude the assumed perpetrator from among their ranks as the cause of that accident. This assigning of blame and the expulsion of the

guilty party(s) restore the community's shaken sense of security by allowing its members to deal with the experience as something that will not be repeated in the future. If one conceives of a traumatic experience as a fluke or accident – an accident in which there is no clear causality and no perpetrator to be expelled – then Idiolect may have to be reconstructed in such a way that such an accident is a real possibility in the future, neither preventable, nor predictable.

It is disturbing to some of the members of the Community of Sam Dent, to have to view a tragic loss as having been purely an accident, or as having arisen from the unhappy intersection of any of a number of factors that cannot be precisely controlled. Such fortunate but accidental circumstances are significantly more disturbing for Mitchell Stephens, however, who still holds out a hope that he will be able to think his way through his daughter's dilemma and save her before it is too late. Instead, he vociferously denies not only that the school bus crash was an accident, but that, indeed, no such thing as an accident exists.

> I knew at once that it wasn't an 'accident' at all. There are no accidents. I don't even know what the word means, and I never trust anyone who says he does. I knew that somebody somewhere had made a decision to cut a corner in order to save a few pennies, and now the state or the manufacturer of the bus or the town, somebody, was busy lining up a troop of smoothies to negotiate with a bunch of grief-stricken bumpkins a settlement that wouldn't

displease the accountants. I packed a bag and headed north, like I said, pissed off. (91-92)

Everything in Mitchell's perception of the world is subject to a rigerous causality and everything falls under the sway of reason – a notion that is particularly appealing to him given that an enormous part of his self esteem and self-identity comes from his perception of himself as an exceptionally intelligent and rational man. (This self-perception is substantiated time and time again by his success both in winning cases, and in his ability to manipulate the individuals involved in them.) In repudiating the possibility that a tragic disaster or loss might occur as the result of uncontrollable factors (i.e. it might be an accident), Mitchell takes refuge in *expectation*; the expectation that such a thing *should not happen.* This kind of subjunctive statement is characteristic of an ethical view of traumatic experience, and constitutes the rigid assertion of expectation in the face of heterogeneous experience that *violates* such expectation. Traumatic experience is, by its very nature, an experience that violates expectation (that is to say, it is heterogeneous to prior experience), punctuating the subjunctive assertion of expectation – *this should not happen* – with an indicative *but it has.*

Mitchell stands form to the assertion *this should not happen*, however like the dreamlike symbolized field of meaning occupied by those defeated victims who cling to meaning prior to their loss; a symbolized field of meaning that has been invalidated. Prior to the tragedy, that statement would have been formulated in the indicative; *this does not happen*, or *this will not happen.* In the wake of evidence to the contrary, Mitchell, as well as the parents who react with anger and with a demand that culpability be established, are

speaking from a Narrative domain – a field of symbolized meaning that is no longer valid, and that therefore, can only be expressed in a hypothetical statement as to what *should* or *should not* be. For those individuals, the accident has not violated natural law, as Billy claimed to have perceived it. Rather, it has violated ethical law. The anger that Mitchell and those parents then experience, articulates a kind of rejection (or in the Freudian terms, repression) of that which has violated the terms of symbolized meaning and identity. That reaction is a defense of meaning that has been annulled, and the mobilization to seek retribution is an effort to *remove* that which violated Idiolect, thereby restoring its validity. Anger arises as an overflow of the semiotic current, just as grief does, bringing with it somatosensory experiences and the overwhelming of the Self by the abject. While grief represents a response in which the individual occupies a now invalidated symbolized domain as a separate and private "reality" – an epistemic crisis – anger appeals to ethics, taking refuge in the prescriptive and delimiting terms of the Communicative domain to restore invalidated Idiolect to its primacy.

Both reactions to tragic loss, that of defeated grief and that of enraged grief, originate when heterogeneous experience, in its nascent field of meaning, is juxtaposed with the prior symbolized meaning of deposed Idiolect, and the semiotic current begins to vacillate between competing channels of signification. That vacillation is complicated in Mitchell Stephens by the fact that his expectations are doubly violated. Not only does he suffer from the traumatic rupture created by the loss of the bond he had with his daughter when she was a child, (thereby juxtaposing competing experiences of her), but he must hold another expectation that she will eventually destroy herself and die of some cause

related to her lifestyle and unconstrained drug use. That expectation contradicts prior expectation that all should go well with his daughter and, as I stated earlier, from it springs the knowledge that yet another field of meaning will eventually emerge – one in which his daughter is gone forever and his active role as father annulled. Like Billy Ansel, Mitchell is lost among a number of symbolized fields of meaning, whether invalidated, on the verge of being invalidated, or on the verge of becoming valid, that conflict with one another and that prevent him from finding an adequate resolution for his traumatic crisis.

Mitchell has not yet suffered his traumatic loss, and this fact plays a significant role in cultivating his attachment to an ethical discourse on trauma. Desperately hoping to defend against the loss of his daughter, Mitchell becomes trapped in the fruitless demand that the experience of loss has violated reality (i.e. this *should* not happen and *will* not happen in the future).His litigation represents both an effort to purge the "transgressor(s)" as the threat to "our children," and an attempt to reinforce the symbolized domain in which his (and everyone's) child is safe and protected. This is one of the seductions that he uses to tempt the angry parents to join with him in the negligence suit, promising to protect them from a reoccurrence of the event in future:

> "It is unlikely anyone will go to prison. He or his company will have to pay in other ways. But pay they will. And we must make them pay, Mrs. Otto, not to benefit you in a material way or to compensate you for the loss of your sin, Bear, which can't be done, but to protect the child you're carrying inside you now.

> Understand, I'm not here to speak just for your anger. I'm here to speak for the future as well. What we're talking about here is our ongoing relation to time." (118)

Certainly there are events and experiences that occur as the result of a culpable party, in which case, prosecution may indeed reduce (but not eliminate) the possibility that a tragedy may be repeated. This juristic process must be viewed as separate from the individual experience of trauma, however, in which causality and culpability may be sought even to absurd lengths in order to restore meaning.

The legalistic, ethical solution with which Mitchell Stephens lures his potential litigants serves to alleviate collective trauma, either by eliminating those individuals from the discursive community who disrupt of the cohesion of social identity, or by giving the impression that this has been achieved. In terms of collective, social trauma, firmly asserting expectation in the face of factual events (this should not happen) reaffirms social identity by which membership in the discursive community can be determined. By asserting the limits on what is recognized in shared signification, such an ethical or juristic approach to trauma leaves individual trauma unaddressed, and may even compound it, as Mitchell himself observes:

> I'm under no delusions – I know that in the end a million-dollar settlement makes no real difference to them, that it probably only serves to sharpen their pain by constricting it with legal language and rewarding it with money, that it complicates the guilt they feel

and forces them to question the authenticity of their own suffering.

I know all that; I've seen it a hundred times. (98)

While an ethical discourse on trauma serves the objectives of collective trauma by reinforcing the boundaries of shared social identity, Mitchell Stephens's pursuit of the negligence suit is essentially self-serving. Mitchell is not a member of the community of Sam Dent and his arrangement of the case does not contribute to the cohesion of that community. Indeed, Mitchell is not interested in the true causes of the accident or where culpability, if any, actually lies. His focus is, in part, on where the "deep pockets" are to be found, since his prosecution of the case depends upon his ability to seduce the litigants into participation with offers of substantial settlements:

> It seemed clear that the bus driver, Dolores Driscoll, was a dead end; she was probably only doing exactly what she had done for years, and besides, she herself had no real property or earning power to attach and was a popular woman in town to boot, a nondrinker with a crippled husband she supported. Not the kind of person you want to sue for negligence. The deep pockets, I knew, were going to be found in the pants worn by the state, the town, and the school board, or, more precisely, by their insurance companies. (106)

Mitchell is also focused on what will "play" well in court, which witnesses or victims will best appeal to the jury's emotions, and most significantly, what will undermine the best efforts of the defense lawyers:

> Fine by me. I had my agenda too. In spite of the injuries, Nicole Burnell looked good, she talked good, and she had suffered immeasurably and would for the rest of her life. A beautiful articulate fourteen-year-old girl in a wheelchair. She was perfect. I could hardly wait to see the other side depose her. (103)

Exhibiting the stereotypical behavior one expects of an "ambulance chasing" lawyer, Mitchell manipulates the truth, arranging the facts so that they will support his case and work against those who might be made to pay large sums in compensation. At the same time, those efforts exonerate those with "shallow pockets" such as Dolores Driscoll in order to maximize the ultimate payout:

> Unless I could establish that the driver of the bus, this Dolores Driscoll, had been safely under the speed limit when she came down the highway that morning, there was no way I'd be able to blame the town or the school district or the state or anyone else with deep pockets for negligence. To nail them, I'd have to defend her. I'd have to defend her even if the brakes or some part of the steering had failed. No matter what the immediate cause of the crash, I'd still have to establish that at the time it left the road the bus was being driven in a proper way and at a safe speed for the conditions. (128-129)

Mitchell acts out his own crisis by displacing it onto the tragedies of strangers like those at Sam Dent. His interest is not truly in the victims of the tragedy, whether they be

the children or their bereaved parents, but on a vague, abstract sense of loss and impending doom:

> Besides, the people of Sam Dent are not unique. We've all lost our children. It's like all the children of America are dead to us. Just look at them, for God's sake – violent on the streets, comatose in the malls, narcotized in front of the TV. In my lifetime something terrible happened that took out children away from us. I don't know if it was the Vietnam war, or the sexual colonization of kids by industry, or drugs, or TV, or divorce, or what the hell it was; I don't know which are causes and which are effects; but the children are gone, that I know. So that trying to protect them is little more than an elaborate exercise in denial. (99)

His approach to the school bus accident is callous, bent on establishing notions of "good" and "bad" according to the usefulness of those categories in achieving his ultimate aims, and that approach reflects his lack of interest in the town or its inhabitants. While the town's citizens would claim that it was tragic that the guardrail was unable to arrest the forward impetus of the school bus, from Mitchell's perspective this inability constitutes the guardrails greatest value:

> I saw where the bus had gone through the low three-cable guardrail and noted that it had been relatively new rail, properly installed. On the other side of the highway, the posts were rusted near the base from the salty runoff; soon those rails, too, would have to be

> replaced. But, regretfully, Dolores Driscoll hadn't gone through over there; she'd snapped off the new poles here on this side, half a dozen of them, dragging the cables with her. From my point of view, the best thing you could say about the new guardrail was that it was utterly incapable of stopping or even diverting the fast-moving bus. (127)

Mitchell's exploitive purpose extends well beyond his personal use of the tragedy as an expression of his own, unrelated traumatic experience, or even the manipulation of the townspeople in order to ensure his own monetary gain. That exploitive purpose also serves a greater agenda in that it works to restore meaning and order for the world at large. Sam Dent constitutes one discursive community with its own innate shared symbolized field (its Communicative domain). Mitchell Stephens, however, is an outsider to that community without legitimate access to meaning as it is mutually constructed among the townspeople, and without any motivation to preserve meaning as they share it. Rather, he represents the view of a larger discursive community that exists outside of the tragedy's direct sphere of influence, and he speaks for those individuals removed from the actual facts of the event. Those people, outsiders like those who "rubbernecked" at the scene of the accident on their way to go skiing, or like the reporters who arrived demanding an account of the townspeople's experiences, desire only to feel that the risk to themselves and to their children has been reduced by the successful prosecution of whomever caused the accident. Like Mitchell, those individuals will be better served if the "perpetrator" is one, like the bus manufacturer, who is "involved" in the tragedy at a

more universal level. The children of the community at large likely ride on buses made by the same manufacturer, and if that manufacturer is then sanctioned, the larger community outside of Sam Dent can feel that the causes of such an event have been removed, thereby safeguarding against its repeated occurrence of the tragedy elsewhere.

In his role as an outsider, Mitchell Stephens stands in as an embodiment of the collective response to trauma – a response that arises not from an unmediated *experience* of something that is traumatizing, but rather, a response that arises from the awareness that something *could* happen if it is not prevented. A judgment of culpability, compensation awarded, and the expulsion of the perpetrator all address this collective trauma – that belonging to the discursive community at large who, since not experientially affected (individual trauma) are traumatized by the trauma testimony itself. Those individuals can no longer say *this does not happen*, and are driven to assert *this should not happen*, seeking refuge in a prohibitive, prescriptive ethical discourse to prevent *potential trauma* from occurring.

This relationship to trauma as a *potential* occurrence makes the social response to trauma – a purely ethical response – comprehensible. In the face of the *potential* invalidation of meaning and identity as testified to by the trauma survivor, the community at large (which does not share the traumatic experience) mobilizes to reinforce the terms and relations of existent meaning and identity. The aim of the social response is to reduce or eliminate the potential for others to share the traumatized individual's experience. This response serves the individual's needs as a social being, but more importantly, it prevents the spread of that experience to others, which could lead to the consensus needed to

revise shared meaning in the Communicative domain. In this sense, the collective, social response to trauma is driven by the same crisis that drives the individual – the fragmentation of symbolized identity, although in the case of collective trauma, that fragmentation occurs in the Communicative domain, rather than in Idiolect.

Mitchell Stephens's narrative approaches a kind of metaphor for the interaction of the traumatized individual and her community with the greater discursive community that does not share the experience. The individual's inescapable realization that *this happens* is silenced, reduced from an epistemic awareness of valid experience to the meager role of the victim who silently points to the perpetrator. With the legal expulsion of the perpetrator from the Self of social identity, the "compensated" victim with her heterogeneous discourse is silenced, and collective trauma is repaired. That juristic approach, driven by the reductive agenda of social identity, essentially exploits the traumatized individual(s) for whom meaning and identity have been annulled by heterogeneous experience (trauma as an epistemic crisis). It does so by imposing meaning in such a way that what is heterogeneous is expelled with the perpetrator, and by generating the perception that a future recurrence of the tragedy "prevented" or, at the very least, reduced.

This exploitive use of the traumatized individuals and the traumatized community of Sam Dent is made palpable in the way in which Mitchell represents the town, in particular in its relationship with the greater community at large:

> Up here, though, the poor are kept out, and it's the rich who stay inside the fence and only in the summer months. It's like Ultima

> Thule or someplace beyond the pale, and most of the people who live here year round are castoffs, tossed out into the back forty and made to forage in the woods for their sustenance and shelter, grubbing nuts and berries, while the rest of us snooze warmly inside the palisade, feet up on the old hassock, brandy by our side, Wall Street Journal unfolded on our lap, good dog Tighe curled up by the fire." (95)

Mitchell's perceptions of his potential clients, betrays the same proprietary view, and a sense of innate superiority. His attitude towards the citizens of the town and his attitude towards views all of the people he seeks to represent, is that they are essentially "country bumpkins" (92) or inbred yokels, as is evidenced by his initial reaction to Wendell Walker:

> No answer; no response whatsoever. He just went on staring down at his lap, as if he didn't or see hear me. One of those country simples, I thought. Inbreeding. Great. First local I get to talk to, and he turns out to be an alien. (104)

Mitchell's exploitive purposes are articulated even more brusquely as he compares his negotiations with Wanda Otto to the negotiations (ultimately reneged upon) of the white men with the Indians:

> The twig chairs and stumps didn't look very comfortable anyhow. Besides, I wanted to get down near the floor, where she was, and look her straight in the eye. Let Hartley hover overhead, out of it,

> making tea. We were going to deal, this lady and I, the Indian chief and the white man. (116)

While Mitchell attempts to manipulate the community to fulfill his own private objectives and the objectives of a larger, more removed discursive community, the town itself has its own social response to collective trauma and ultimately, its own agenda. At times, that response coincides with Mitchell's manipulation of the situation. Like Mitchell Stephens, the inhabitants of Sam Dent are reluctant to assign blame to Dolores Driscoll for the accident, although for wholly different reasons. For the inhabitants of the town – a town set apart, with a population that shares a traumatic event, if not a single traumatic experience – Dolores is one of their own, herself a victim:

> I damned sure did not want to go after Dolores Driscoll, and, for somewhat different reasons, neither did my clients. Never mind that her pockets weren't an inch deep; she was well-liked, sober, hardworking, from an old respected Sam Dent family, sole supporter of a crippled husband, and she'd been driving the local kids to school safely for more than twenty years. Worse, the parents viewed her as having been victimized just as much as they were themselves, and a jury would agree with them. (129)

Mitchell's approach to selecting a "perpetrator" entails assigning full culpability or full exoneration to each individual caught in the wide net he casts looking for potential targets for his suit. The clear-cut nature of this kind of juristic/ethical approach seeks to limit ambiguity and restore stability to the symbolized field of meaning constituted in the

Communicative domain (that which exists outside of Sam Dent alone). Individual trauma, on the other hand – that is, the experience of trauma as an epistemic crisis – seeks to come to terms with the imposition of awareness that meaning is arbitrary and not sufficient to express all possible experience. Individual trauma is characterized by the covalent vacillation between instances of signified meaning that can neither be merged nor separated – a vacillation that is experienced as a loss of meaning, the inadequacy or breakdown of language, as well as the division of subjectivity. The response of the traumatized residents of Sam dent to Dolores reflects that covalent, whereby Dolores is both innocent *and* guilty.

> It wasn't too hard to see what the difficulty was – these people liked Dolores, she was one of them, and they felt profoundly sorry for her as for themselves; but they also could not help blaming her and wanting to cast her out. They would have preferred that she simply disappear from the town for a while, go and stay with her son in Plattsburgh or at least hide behind the door of her house with her husband up there on Bartlett Hill. They wanted her to stash her pain and guilt where they didn't have to look at it. (143)

The town's response to its own collective trauma – that is, to the breakdown of the social fabric that held the town's inhabitants together, each in his or her respective social role – is complicated by the ambiguities of the situation. As a discursive community comprised largely of individuals who have been directly affected by the tragedy, the resolution of the town's collective trauma will not be to impose a simplistic

causality and culpability on the experience. Rather, shared signification will have to be altered to accommodate the ambiguity of meaning experienced by so many of the townspeople. Here, the impetus generated by those individuals; epistemic crises will be sufficient to challenge and alter the structure of shared signification in the Communicative domain. In Sam Dent, epistemic crisis is sufficiently widespread to form its own consensus. The way in which shared signification is altered will need to adequately express the manifold individual experiences of the townspeople, however, and will require a significant amount of negotiation and compromise within that closed community. (We will see the compromise reached in the final chapter of the novel.)

Dolores's role in the community and her relationship to the accident poses a particular difficulty for the restoration of shared signification in Sam Dent. In the clear-cut, juristic treatment of the situation by Mitchell, he declares Dolores *not useful* to the project of restoring meaning, and therefore *not culpable*. The resolution of her role in that greater discourse is clear-cut and simple. This is not true of the resolution of her social role in the discursive of the town itself. Dolores's ambiguous relationship to the accident (both as the party responsible for driving the bus, and as a victim of the crash) impedes the resolution of the trauma within the discursive community of Sam Dent. As a member of that community, Dolores refuses to "disappear," seeking a social judgment by her peers as to her guilt or innocence, both in terms of her own apprehension of herself as subject, and in order to establish how her role in the community will change after the accident:

> But she wasn't having any of that. Silently, with her head bowed, Dolores was plunking herself down in the exact center of the town's grief and rage, compelling them by her presence at these funerals to define her. Was she a victim of the tragedy, or was she the cause of it? She had placed herself on the scales of their judgment, but they did not want to judge her. To them, she was both, of course, victim and cause; just as to herself she was both. Like every parent when something terrible happens to his child, Dolores was innocent, and she was guilty. We knew which, in the eyes of God and our fellowman, we were, despite the fact that most of the time we felt like both; but she did not. Denial was impossible for her, so she wanted us to come forward and do the job for her. (143-144)

The unique, bifurcated quality of Sam Dent's crisis leaves that affected community with its own social needs, distinct from those of the social entity that Mitchell represents. Mitchell Stephens offers monetary compensation to many of the town's residence as a means of seducing their participation in his suit. In Dolores's case, however, he appeals to her desire to establish her own guilt or innocence – a judgment that the town itself withholds in the face of her ambiguous status. Approaching Dolores at the one of the local churches, where she is unobtrusively attending the funeral for one of the children who died, Mitchell promises to establish her guilt or innocence thereby settling the matter once and for all:

> "I can tell you, I can tell you whether you are guilty or not." I was out of breath; for her size, the woman moved pretty fast.
>
> "Who are you? Who is it can do that? No one can do that. (144)

In her own mind, Dolores is not certain of the facts that could prove her degree of culpability either way. When questioned by the police, she testified that she was driving within the speed limit, however in truth, she is only certain of the range within she might have been driving based on habit and probability:

> "Me? Represent me? No," she said. "You can't. I only said I was doing fifty, fifty-five. To the police; to Captain Wyatt Pitney, from the state police. Because that's how I remembered it. But the truth, mister, is that I might have been doing sixty miles and hour when the bus went over, or sixty-five. Not seventy, I'm sure. But sixty is possible. Sixty-five even. (145-146)

There is no empirical evidence that can establish her guilt or innocence in juristic terms. The judgment that she anticipates is from the court of public opinion; the way in which her community will eventually choose to define her role in the accident, and her future role among her fellow citizens.

In seducing Dolores, Mitchell appeals to her social self – her identity as a member of the community of Sam Dent, and the role of that community in establishing the parameters of what may be accepted as true. He attempts, in other words, to speak for the town, and to predict the townspeople's ultimate reception of Dolores:

> "It's clear to me and many other people that you have suffered significantly from this event. And then, Dolores, Driscoll, your name, your very good name, will be cleared once and for all in this town. Everyone will know then that you, too, have suffered enormously, we'll have established it legally, and then you will not have to bear any of the blame. (146)

By promising to establish her innocence legally, he claims to be able to restore her place within the boundaries of shared social identity, however the social entity and discursive community that Mitchell Stephens represents is that larger community. As an outsider, he cannot speak for the intimate discursive community of which Dolores is a part. Revealing the wisdom she habitually hides and projects onto Abbott (as described in the previous chapter), Dolores interprets Abbott's garbled protest of Mitchell's proposition with the observation that she must be judged by her peers; the people of her town. Dolores recognizes the hollow promise that Mitchell makes to her as he attempts to enlist her help in prosecuting his case. His objective, however, is to use her to formulate a traumatic discourse that serves his own interests, and that of a "community" outside of Sam Dent – a discourse that addresses the fear of *potential* trauma, not trauma that has already occurred. It is for the citizens of Sam Dent alone to determine the shape that symbolized meaning will take within the discursive community that they share.

Mitchell's observes that the town has begun to make a formalized response to the tragedy, organizing memorial events and collections for the victims (largely superfluous) as a means of integrating the event into the community's consciousness. The events

sponsored and the activities undertaken are not so much pragmatically oriented as they are oriented towards alleviating the community's sense of helplessness in the face of the senseless accident. These efforts include the donation of money to the victims' families, but also stuffed animals and other items that articulate the desire to offer comfort, however impractical the gift might ultimately be. The majority of these activities, however, including the memorial service held by both state representatives and various local clergy, and the erection of fourteen crosses at the site of the crash, represent the need to memorialize the event – that is, to give it a symbolized representation by invoking a unifying authority, both governmental and religious. The appeal to religion, in particular, expresses the community's desire to find a suitable explanation for the disaster since as Dolores noted, religion is "the main way the unexplainable gets explained. God's will and all" (26):

> The town was beginning to formalize its response to the tragedy. There had appeared one morning fourteen tiny crosses out at the crash site, which turned out to be the work of schoolchildren, at the instigation of the school board. So much for the separation of church and state. A memorial service for the victims, announced in the local weekly newspaper, was scheduled to be held in the following week in the school auditorium, where the state representative from the district, the school principal, and half a dozen area clergymen would intone. Money was being collected, ostensibly for the families of the victims […] TV viewers from all

> around the country were sending contributions – money, clothing, canned food, stuffed animals, crucifixes, and potted plants […]. (138 - 139)

These formalized responses takes place where the community of Sam Dent and the community at large (represented by Mitchell Stephens) intersect, each with their own distinct needs. The collective trauma for which Mitchell speaks is that of a discursive community not directly affected by the accident, and the resolution of that traumatic process takes the form of the sanitation of that which has blurred the boundaries of symbolized meaning and violated expectation. We observed this effort to sanitize meaning in the desire to isolate a perpetrator (or perpetrators), and to prosecute and censor those individuals. This objective is also apparent in Mitchell Stephens's reaction to the town's efforts to come to terms with its loss, however; efforts which Mitchell dismisses with the sarcastic observation: "So much for the separation of church and state" (138). The traumatized discursive community, like the traumatized individual, must recreate a field of symbolized meaning that has been ruptured by heterogeneous experience, doing so in this case by attempting to bind the mundane to the divine. Mitchell's dismissal, on the other hand, not only overlooks the needs of the community, it also reflects his intention to restore the clean separation of terms and entities that traumatic *experience* demands be merged.

The ethical interpretation of the event by the town of Sam dent will naturally differ from that of he greater social consensus outside of the town as represented by Mitchell Stephens. His efforts to impose an ethical solution, as we will see, will prove to

be potentially destructive both for the individual in crisis, and for the community of Sam Dent as well. In terms of opposing traumatic processes – that of individual traumatic crisis (epistemic and experiential) and that of social, collective trauma (ethical), – the novel gives us a gradation of responses, in which the wholly unique epistemic crisis of each citizen of Sam Dent must find adequate expression in the Communicative domain created by the discursive community of that town. Within that community, the sheer number of individuals directly affected by the precipitating event will, by default, generate the consensus needed to modify shared signification, thereby accommodating the traumatic crisis of its members to one degree or another. No such consensus can be reached in the second discursive community represented here; the community that extends beyond the borders of the town into the world at large and that includes the journalists who come to report on the tragedy, the therapist sent in from Plattsburgh to counsel the surviving children, and Mitchell Stephens himself.

That greater community, which does not share the unmediated experience of loss, opposes not only the discourse of the individual, traumatized citizens of Sam Dent, but the social discourse of the community itself. Sam Dent's efforts to create meaning out of tragedy will result in a discursive community that is set apart from the larger community by the pervasive effect of their common bereavement and the necessary change in shared signification. The title of the novel, *The Sweet Hereafter* itself refers to this separation of the town from the greater discursive consensus, alluding to Robert Browning's *Pied Piper of Hamlin* in which the children are seduced, lured away to punish the residents of Hamlin for their greed. The reference addresses not only the loss of the children,

however, but to the residence of the town's inhabitants in a dreamlike "Sweet Hereafter" as a world that the inhabitants share with their lost children, beyond the grasp of reason or reality. The unique reality and ethics of the town, now a place apart, more succinctly expressed in Atom Egoyan's film of the same name than in the novel itself, which never explicitly provides an explanation for its title. In the final scene of that film, the character, Nicole Burnell describes the separation of the town and its inhabitants from the greater social domain. That separation is created by the townspeople's experience of life intermingled with death, and Nichole ends that description with a fitting citation from Browning's poem itself:

> As you see her [Dolores] two years later, I wonder if you realize something? I wonder of you understand that all of us, Dolores, me, the children who survived, the children who didn't – that we're all citizens of a different town. A place with its own special rules and its own special laws; a town of people living in the Sweet Hereafter: "Where waters gushed and fruit trees grew, and flowers put forth a fair hue, and everything was fair and new." Everything was fair and new.

Individual members of the community of Sam Dent are forced to seek a common apprehension of the accident that will allow them to once again interact as a unified discursive community with a shared field of symbolized meaning. This necessity renders them vulnerable to Mitchell Stephens's seductive promises that he can restore causality and legally codify the meaning of their loss. It is not readily apparent to many of the

town's residents that Mitchell's "ethical" solution speaks for a discursive community outside of their town, not for the town of Sam Dent itself, nor for its citizens. (The novel's primary characters, Billy Ansel, Dolores Driscoll and Nicole Burnell, however, all reject this invasive manipulation of their loss and, as we will see, Nicole Burnell will prevent the imposition of this outside apprehension of meaning on her town, thereby "saving" it.) A significant portion of the town's citizens – the Walkers, Ottos and others – fall prey to the seduction of a simple and clear-cut answer promised by Mitchell Stephens, who claims the accident was simply the result of someone's callous decision to "sacrifice a few lives" in the interest of greater profits:

> And it's up to people like me to make it cheaper to build the bus with that extra bolt, or add the extra yard of guardrail, or drain the quarry. That's the only check you've got against them. That's the only way you can ensure moral responsibility in this society. Make it cheaper. (91)

Those who are angered by their loss, expressing their outrage with the rigid assertion *this should not happen* in the face of the reality that *this does and has happened*, are seduced by Mitchell's promise to exact revenge. Some are made doubly vulnerable by being both enraged by a sense of having been cheated, as well as being simply greedy. Those individuals, such as the Walkers and Nicole Burnell's parents, are the most easily manipulated and, once they become attached to the promise of monetary compensation, allow their efforts to find meaning in the accident to take a back seat to their pecuniary interests:

> This was a happy start for me, a lucky break. The Walkers were classically pissed off. Both of them. They wanted revenge, which was useless to them, of course – they weren't going to get it, but they didn't know that yet. And as I later learned, they wanted money, not as a compensation but because they had been broke for so long and had always wanted it. (105-106)

Others are not motivated by greed, but instead use Mitchell to exact the revenge they desire, in a sense counter-manipulating the situation to meet their own needs at Mitchell's instigation:

> The Walkers had seemed more muddled in their motives. The money promised by the lawsuit meant a lot to them, of course, but in a greedy childish way, and certainly more than they were willing to admit to themselves or reveal openly to me. The Walkers were poor and in debt, and their poverty had bugged them for years, and it seemed even more unfair to them now, with their child gone, than before. But Wanda Otto, and her husband too, never struck me as having any selfish interest in the money; they cared only about its handy capacity to function as punishment and prohibition. (118-119)

In order to successfully prosecute his case, Mitchell decides that he must exonerate Dolores, whose pockets are notably "shallow," and against whom none of the townspeople are likely to want to testify. In order to do so, Mitchell must provide a

witness who observed the accident, who had no direct part in the accident, and significantly, who is not involved in any of the litigation surrounding the case; either that instigated by Mitchell Stephens, or by any of the other lawyers who have flocked to the town in search of litigants. Billy Ansel is the natural choice, since he was driving behind the bus, and is therefore the "perfect witness" from Mitchell's point of view:

> It was Wendell who mentioned Billy Ansel. Risa kept silent, and I figured he was the guy she was having an affair with. That could be trouble, so I put an asterisk next to his name; but otherwise he was almost too good to be true. Ansel was a widower, much admired in the town, a Vietnam vet, a war hero, practically. And he had lost his two children, who were twins. Also, he had actually witnessed the event; he'd been following the bus in his truck on his way to work that morning and had helped remove the victims. He'd know, by God, that his kids were dead. No denial there. (109)

In addition to an "uninvolved witness," Mitchell also needs to ensure the jury's emotional involvement in the case, thereby making it more likely that they will award substantial damages. Mitchell needs a living victim, since a jury is reluctant to compensate the dead, and for this purpose, he chooses Nicole Burnell as the centerpiece of his case. Nicole Burnell survived the bus accident with a broken back, and as a result of her injury, is confined to a wheelchair, paralyzed from the waist down:

> And there was the girl Nicole Burnell, who survived the wreck; she was going to be the lynchpin of the case, an all-American teenaged

> beauty queen whose life was ruined by her injuries and by the trauma of having survived such an ordeal. A living victim is more effective with a jury than a dead one; you can't compensate the dead, they feel. That's how I planned to present her; luckily, it was how her parents viewed the event too. She was their destiny, their glory: for their future, they had nothing but her future, and since it had been taken away from her, it had all been taken, as they saw it, from them as well: so now they were out for blood. One way or the other, they were going to continue to use her to get what they thought was their due. (102-103)

Nichole is attractive as a witness for a number of reasons. Not only does she present the jury with a living image of tragic loss, but her parents are among the town's inhabitants who take a proprietary view of their daughter, and who are essentially driven by overwhelming greed. In addition, the family's standing in the community is quite good and they are well respected. One of the contingencies that Mitchell places on his potential clients is that they be people who "[come] across as sensitive, loving parents, people with a solid family life, with no criminal background or history of trouble in town. Good neighbors I wanted, decent hardworking people […]" (107). The Burnells are ideal to take the lead in Mitchell's suit:

> Risa, as if relieved not to be talking about Billy Ansel any longer, rattled off the names of half a dozen families, including the Burnells, Mary and Sam, whose daughter Nichole was in the

> eighth grade, president of the class, queen of last fall's Harvest Ball. "A potential Miss Essex County, or even a Miss New York," Risa said wistfully. "I'm serious." Nichole was in the hospital in Lake Placid with a broken back, still unconscious, as far as they knew. Her parents, they agreed, were poor but honest, churchgoers. Pillars of the community, Wendell noted sarcastically. Her father, Sam, was a plumber; her mother sang in the choir. Nichole had been everybody's favorite babysitter. (110)

Ultimately, Mitchell's attempt to impose a falsely constructed ethical interpretation on the tragic loss and on the town's loss will fail, brought down by the efforts of townspeople like Billy Ansel and Dolores Driscoll, who refuse to testify, and Nicole Burnell, who lies at her deposition, effectively killing the case. Those individuals recognize that Mitchell's solution for the town is not their solution. The town of Sam Dent, as the discursive community that most closely binds the victims of that tragedy, will need to form its own response to the tragedy as separate and unique from the dominant discourse of society at large.

5.2 Nichole Burnell: Covalence and the Resolution of Traumatic Crisis

The individual accounts presented thus far have each dealt with a specific period of time in relation to the school bus accident, with each period being defined by the dominant crisis of the individual involved. Dolores Driscoll's "testimony" focused on the events leading up to the accident, ending with the moment that the bus left the road and

went out onto the ice. Billy Ansel, who had been driving behind the bus, speaks largely of the accident itself and the immediate aftermath during which the bodies are recovered and the bus towed away. Mitchell Stephens was not present when the accident occurred, and speaks instead of the town's immediate reaction to the tragedy as he arranges a class negligence suit in which Nichole Burnell is to appear as his star victim. Nichole, who provides with the last individual account before we return to Dolores Driscoll will address the events leading up to her deposition in the case, and what will ultimately be its premature conclusion.

Like all of the other characters in the novel, Nichole's traumatic experience is unique, shaped by the specifics of her involvement in the actual accident, and by traumatic experience that precedes this precipitating event. Like the others, existent traumatic schisms play a role in the way in which Nichole responds to the accident. What has the most immediate impact, however, is the fact that Nichole survived the accident, but was permanently disabled by it. That status of having survived but having also been crippled creates a shifting line of demarcation between *lucky* and *unlucky* (each a *res nulla*). Some of the children like Nichole's sister Jennie, "survived" the accident by having been kept home on that day, while others, like Nichole's two brothers, had been sitting at the very front of the bus, and therefore survived uninjured. Nichole, on the other had, had been sitting at the mid-way point between total escape and death, and she is the only child who both survived, but who suffered lasting injury and a resulting handicap. This unique outcome makes Nichole the "unluckiest" among the children sitting near the

front of the bus (the survivors) but the luckiest of the children sitting near the back of the bus (all of whom died).

Nichole suffers a post-traumatic loss of memory, which is also considered to be good fortune. When Nichole awakens from the accident in the hospital, she is unable to remember the accident itself. Termed anamnesis in trauma theory, Nichole experiences a lacuna in her memory that she describes as though her experiences before the accident were held in a room separate from her experiences afterwards, with the two conjoined by a door – a gap that contains nothing, but that nevertheless divides discrete domains or "realities":

> I'm lucky, they all say, because I can't remember the accident. Lucky that it's like a door between rooms, and there was one room on the far side, and that room I remember fine, and another on the near side, and I remember it too. I'm still in it. But I don't remember the accident, and that's counted lucky by everyone. (159)

Nichole herself does not characterize this anamnesis as being fortunate, but rather, it is others who tell her that it is so. This holds true for the other ways in which she is judged to be "lucky" – in particular for having survived the accident at all. From Nichole's own internal perspective, of course, that "luckiness" is mitigated by the harsh reality of her disability, and the realization that she will spend the rest of her life in a wheelchair. She realizes, with dismay, that the kind of effort that would previously have enabled her to

excel, will now be required simply to prevent the further deterioration of her paralyzed lower body:

> By then I knew I was as well as I would ever be again, and Dr. Robeson had told me that just to stay like this I would have to work very hard. So shut up, Mom, go to hell. To live like a slug, I was going to have to work like someone trying to become an Olympic ski jumper. (160)

Nichole cannot remember the accident, however she is gradually able to piece together the facts of what happened from media reports and from what people reluctantly reveal to her. The domain of what constitutes good fortune emerges as a domain that does not appear to explicitly include those who remained wholly unaffected by the accident in a direct way, but instead, is focused on Nichole – the one individual who most narrowly escaped death:

> I did not remember the accident, maybe, but I definitely knew what had happened. I could read the newspapers, and of course I had asked people, and eventually people had told me, although they had not wanted to. Everyone had come to the hospital to visit and tell me how lucky I was, to touch me on the hands and shoulders and top of my head like I was some kind of rabbit's foot, so when I asked them about the other kids, what happened to the other kids who were on the bus that morning, at first no one was willing to tell me. (169)

The distinction of *lucky* and *unlucky* is enlisted to define the thin line between total disaster and near disaster, for which Nichole serves the unique purpose of representing not only the person who survived, but the person who came the closest to perishing but did not. That estimation of good fortune, based upon the outcome of the accident, comes to supercede the ordinary expectation that anyone involved in the accident, in particular someone who is severely injured, has suffered a great misfortune. In a sense, the accident has created a unique evaluation of what constitutes luck, essentially assigning it a new signified value:

> Slowly people let me know. One by one. That's how I came to understand what they meant by lucky. Rudy and Skip, they were especially lucky; they had been up front in the bus and had been almost the first to be removed from it, with barely a scratch on either of them. Jennie had stayed home sick that day. There were a bunch like that. Close calls. Because I was regarded as one myself, people liked standing around in the hospital room talking to me and each other about all the close calls. (170)

The collective apprehension of "good luck" establishes Nichole as fortunate in the most profound and disturbing way – that is, as having passed the closest to death while still escaping it. (We saw a similar perception of the transcendent quality lent by a near-death experience in Dolores's description of Abbott, whom she believes has acquired a profound wisdom as a result of having "passed so near to death" (3). Nichole's estimation of her own good fortune, too, is influenced by the realization that she has been very

fortunate compared with her schoolmates who perished. Compared with her own brothers and sisters, however, all of whom came through the accident physically unscathed for one reason or another, she is most unfortunate. More importantly to Nichole's appreciation of her own identity, she is the unfortunate when compared with who she had been before the accident. Predictably, Nichole's sense of being "lucky" is tempered by the simultaneous awareness of how "unlucky" she has also been. The tone she uses when she evokes the notion of her good luck is sarcastic, and slightly bitter:

> Sean Walker had been in front, like me, but when the bus flipped over he'd fractured his skull and died from it before they got him out of the bus, and I'd only broken my back. So I was lucky, right? (170)

A sense of good fortune is evoked in the greater comparison with others who died in the accident, and exists only as long as the memory of their loss overshadows the awareness of how Nichole's own life is now changed. Her good fortune is derived, in other words, from her existence as a social being in a community that has suffered an even greater loss in the deaths of fourteen of its children. In terms of individual trauma and an experience of personal loss, however, that good fortune has less meaning. As Nichole notes:

> "You can feel lucky that you didn't die in the accident for only so long," I said. "And then you start to feel unlucky." (183)

The intersection of comparative good fortune (i.e. Nichole did not die) and comparative misfortune (i.e. she was crippled in the accident), set the stage is set for Nichole to develop *survivor guilt*. Lucky and unlucky are mutually preclusive terms and

states of being. In feeling wholly fortunate, Nichol cannot grieve the loss of the ability to walk or the death of her schoolmates, and yet, if she feels unlucky as a result of what she has been through, then she cannot feel pure gratitude at having survived. Guilt then arises towards those who were even less fortunate – those who died in the accident – when her own grief and trauma prevent her from feeling entirely fortunate. The distinction between *lucky* and *unlucky* correlates in this sense, with the distinction of *grateful* and *ungrateful* as a distinction that defines an appropriate response to traumatic crisis. Thus, to feel less than completely grateful for one's survival constitutes ingratitude, but to be completely grateful is to deny the trauma that one has oneself suffered. Unable to resign herself to her mother's religious explanation in which luck, good or bad, plays no role in the events of life, and unable to repress her emotions as her father does, Nichole experiences her ambivalent emotions as a failure to respond appropriately, and therefore as an occasion for guilt:

> I felt guilty for having so much emotion about the subject. When you live with people like my mother, who thinks Jesus takes care of everything except your weight, and my father, who goes around whistling and hammering and sawing all the time, you tend to feel guilty for your emotions. At least I did. (188)

Survivor guilt is not, of course, something that affects Nichole alone, although her role in the community as the person "who must nearly died but did not" forces her to deal with it most overtly. (It closely resembles Dolores's dilemma as to whether or not she is a victim of the accident, or the guilty cause of it.) In truth, a similar ambivalent line of

division exists for those who were injured compared with those who were not; those who were on the bus that day, and those who were not; between those who did not have children on the bus, and those who did; and between those within the affected community of Sam Dent, and outsiders like Mitchell or the reporters who covered the story. We see evidence of just such an ambiguous distinction in the uncomfortable tension between Nichole and her brothers after she returns home from the accident:

> Rudy and Skip came down from their bedroom and said hi and all, looking self-conscious and like they wished they weren't there, as if I was some old relative they had to be polite to. (162)

An ambivalent line between good and ill fortune and a potential for survivor guilt (albeit in a much diminished form) even exists for those people outside the community who were indirectly traumatized by the realization that what happened in Sam Dent could potentially happened to them, and who therefore suffered a loss in their sense of security. Ultimately, the only truly fortunate people, and therefore the only people not vulnerable to some degree of guilt, are those who remain completely unaffected by the event, either because they were not emotionally touched by the news, or because they never heard about it. The truly lucky then, are those who never realize that they *should* feel fortunate.

The accident clearly has a powerful impact on Nichole, as well as on her quality of life. At the same time, there are other divisions in her subjectivity that play a crucial role in her response to the accident, and just as significantly, that are pushed to crisis by that precipitating event. In Nichole's case, one such division is the distinction between being a child and being an adult. It is a division of subjectivity that she feels very acutely,

in part because she finds herself in the midst of adolescence. Much like Fridolin in *Traumnovelle* (see Chapter 3), who found himself in an awkward stage of life between being young and being old (middle age), Nichole finds herself in that awkward period of life that straddles childhood and adulthood. Just as Nichole's life is divided into a life that existed before the accident, and a life that existed after it, her life is about to be divided with childhood in her past and adulthood in her present. As she begins to present her account, however, she occupies that poorly defined domain in between the two. Her ambivalent identity emerges in her interactions with her doctor, whom she calls Dr. Frankenstein in a childish expression of despair and frustration, but whom she resents for reacting to her as though she were a child, and not as a person with a fully formed understanding of her predicament:

> I was sick of Dr. Robeson and had started calling him Dr. Frankenstein, even to his face, which of course he thought was cute. It wasn't cute; I did it because I felt like a monster and Dr. Robeson had created me out of all these different body parts. I couldn't walk as good as Frankenstein's monster, I couldn't walk at all, though I could talk fine; but I felt ugly like him and out of it, different from everyone else. (161)

The fact that Nichole is an adolescent establishes a naturally-occurring but difficult division of subjectivity and identity that just happens to coincide with the bus accident and with the divisive crisis that this accident engenders. Adolescence, however, is a traumatic crisis (a division of identity) that will resolve itself with time. The

ambivalent distinction between childhood and adulthood is further exacerbated for Nichole however, by ongoing sexual abuse by her father. Incest is traumatic to a child for a broad variety of reasons, including the violation of basic trust to a person who safeguards the child's wellbeing and survival, and guilt that the child might feel for "participating" in an activity that the child may not yet recognize is fully coerced. The sexual abuse by Nichole's father also blurs the line between childhood and adulthood, whereby Nichole interacts with Sam as his child, but takes on the adult role of a sexual partner in certain instances – at Sam's instigation.

Nichole occupies two "realities" or symbolized domains, the first of which she shares with her entire family, and the second, which she shares with her father alone. Her movement between these symbolized domains is entirely controlled by her father. Without the verification of this clandestine symbolized domain by a larger discursive community, and with verification of that domain withheld by the father often for long periods of time between episodes of abuse, it is not surprising that Nichole's apprehension of the sexual abuse often relegates that experience to the insubstantiality of a dream:

> Those times when he left me alone, I thought maybe I had dreamed the whole thing up, dreams are like that, or had imagined it, because even when I was a little kid like Jennie, before Daddy started touching me that way, I had imagined some things that had made me ashamed, sexual things, sort of. Everybody does that. So maybe I had imagined this too. A few weeks would pass, and I'd

> start to forget that it had actually happened, and then I'd feel guilty for having been so upset and confused. (173-174)

Nichole cannot apprehend the sexual abuse in the way she would apprehend a rape – by coming to terms with it as a part of a new Idiolectic domain – since between these episodes of abuse she must continue to function within the family as though the incest had never occurred. Not only would the integration of that abuse in Idiolect make such split functioning difficult, but the revelation of what is occurring could jeopardize the integrity of the family unit (the most essential discursive community to which Nichole belongs). In addition, any attempt to directly address the abuse could result in her discrediting and exclusion from the family, since the reality of that abuse is shared with the father alone, and is unlikely to be validated by him. Finally, since the abuse is signified in a reality that can only be validated by the father, damaging her connection with the father would eliminate the only discursive community in which the incest is acknowledged, even intermittently. (This sharing of an otherwise unknown symbolized "reality" forms a significant basis of *Stockholm Syndrome*; an otherwise seemingly incomprehensible identification of the victim with the perpetrator.)

The fact of this sexual abuse complicates the division of Nichole's identity. Like the distinction between *lucky* and *unlucky*, the distinction between *childhood* and *adulthood* is fundamentally muddled. Nichole wishes to see her role as a child in her family restored; a role that is determined by the kind of relationship she has with her parents rather than by age, and a role in which she should be unavailable to her father as a potential sexual partner. At the same time, it is her very status as a child that makes her

vulnerable to abuse. As a child, Nichole is powerless as compared with adults. Her words carry less weight, as we saw in Dr. Robeson's failure to validate her traumatic sense of fragmentation when she called him Dr. Frankenstein. By claiming adulthood, Nichole can also claim an adult's power, ironically, to escape the precocious role as her father's sexual partner. In so doing, however, she risks destroying the family to which she seeks to return as a child. The conundrum she faces, is to exercise an adult's power to determine her own limits and boundaries, putting an end to the incest, while at the same time avoiding the revelation of that abuse so that she can return to her role as nothing more (and nothing else) than the daughter of Sam and Mary Burnell.

The division of subjectivity into someone who is fortunate and someone who is a victim, and in particular the public perception of Nichole as fortunate in the face of her private realization of her loss mirrors a prior division created by the incest. The public opinion of the Burnell family is that they are "pillars of the community" (110), and Nichole herself is known as someone who is exceptionally fortunate, the prom queen and a teen beauty pageant winner. Behind this public persona of someone who is not only fortunate, but also as an object of desire lies Nichole's private realization of her own victimization, and of her parents proprietary attitude towards her, both sexually (in the case of her father), but also as a "victim" who can garner them a substantial monetary settlement over the accident.

This split between being a victim and being an object of desire touches on a sensitive point in the incest that occurs between Sam and Nichole. Although it is clearly an instance of abuse that is both initiated and controlled by Sam, it is simultaneously

clear that Sam has manipulated Nichole by appealing to what she desires to be. In the novel, Sam helps Nichole to become a beauty queen, while in the film he helps her to become a folk-rock star, even promising to build her a stage of her own, in both cases essentially preying on her desires for herself in order to seduce her. In this way, the reality that Sam and Nichole share includes not only the devastating knowledge of the sexual abuse that has occurred, but it also includes desired aspects of identity that are not otherwise articulated. On Sam's instigation, he and Nichole create a mutual fantasy – one in which she becomes the beauty queen/ movie star she dreams of being, while Sam creates the "movie star" he fantasizes about. The ambiguity of that mutual fantasy is expressed perhaps the most concisely in the film, both in the casting of Sam, and in his interaction with Nichole, which makes him appear at first to be perhaps an older boyfriend until Nichole refers to him as "Daddy."

The ambiguity in Nichole's relationship with her father and in particular, her investment in the mutual fantasy that they create does not make her mutually responsible for the incest, of course, but it does point to the vulnerability that Sam exploits in order to manipulate Nichole. The simultaneously positive and negative aspect of their incestuous relationship only complicates the matter, making it more difficult for Nichole to protect herself against her father's advances. The sexual abuse has a profoundly negative impact on Nichole's sense of self and her emotional security, even pushing her to thoughts of suicide as a way to escape it:

> When we got home I would run into the house from the car and go straight to me room upstairs with my heart pounding and a roaring

> sound in my ears. It was awful. I lay in bed in the darkness with my clothes still on and listened to him lock up below and walk slowly up the stairs and go into his and Mom's room and shut the door. […] I lay awake trying to think up ways to kill myself that wouldn't upset Jennie too much. Usually, I decided on sleeping pills and Daddy's vodka in the kitchen cupboard. Like Marilyn Monroe. But I didn't know how to get hold of any sleeping pills, so the next day I always gave it up and instead tried to make what had happened in the car coming home from the Ansels's seem like I only dreamed it. (174-175)

At a subtle, emotional level, the abuse negates Nichole's identity as a child in the Burnell family. At the same time, the end of the abuse also entails the loss of the "identity" that existed only in the symbolized domain created by and shared within the private discursive community that the two comprise. Indeed, after the accident and Nichole's reliance on a wheelchair for mobility, it becomes difficult or even impossible for Sam to continue his fantasy. As one of the few positive outcomes in the immediate aftermath of the accident, he appears to have lost all interest in Nichole:

> Things with Daddy were different now too. I had become a wheelchair girl, and I think that scared him, like it does most people. You see them on the street staring at you and then looking away, as if you were a freak. To Daddy, it was like I was made of spun glass and he was afraid he would break me if he touched me.

> Probably I wasn't pretty to him anymore, either, and he couldn't pretend that I was like some beautiful movie star, the way he used to. (179)

There is a hint of hurt feelings and a sense of being rejected in this observation, as though perhaps her beauty is diminished by her disability. She expressed this fear when she began referring to her physician as Dr. Frankenstein, envisioning herself as a monster cobbled together out of the shattered remains of a body. That fear is then reinforced by Sam's sudden loss of interest in her, however unwanted that interest might otherwise have been.

The "mutual secret" that Nichole shares with her father stresses another opposition in her daily life and identity. On the one hand, she experiences the inclusion of being the center of her father's undivided attention. At the same time, she has a profound experience of marginalization, both within the family (because of her secret), and by her father, whose interest in her evaporates when he is not sexually exploiting her. She notes that her efforts to imagine that the abuse had never really happened, is made easier by Sam's fluctuating interest in her:

> I didn't have to try very hard, because Daddy, except when he wanted to do those things with me, the rest of the time treated me normally, like nothing wrong had happened. Always, the next morning at breakfast he was just the same old Daddy, grumpy and distracted, bossing the boys and me and Jennie around, ignoring Mom the way he does, while she fussed in the kitchen, shoving

> food at the rest of us and as usual worrying over her diet. She never eats anything in front of anybody but keeps getting fatter and fatter all the time. She's not a blimp, but she is fat. (175)

The secret that Nichole keeps separates her from others in her family, just as that secret essentially separates Sam from the others. Before the accident, their mutual silence allows them to maintain the appearance of a normally integrated family life. After the accident, however, with each family member responding to the accident in a different way, Nichole finds that her sense of fragmentation in the family is even more pronounced – "fission in the nuclear family" (121) as Mitchell expresses it. Nichole's prior awareness of how a secret can separate one within one's own private reality enables her to perceive that later disintegration as the product of secret knowledge that cannot be shared:

> It had started back when Daddy started touching me and making me keep his secret, but he and I were the only ones who knew about that, so we had all gone on afterwards as if we were still a normal family, with everyone needing and trusting one another, just like you're supposed to. But now it was like everyone, not just me and Daddy had their secrets, and Jennie and I had ours, and Rudy and Skip had theirs, and we each had our own lonely secrets that we shared with no one. (198)

For Nichole, the sense of separation is more dramatically pronounced, both because of the incest that she had had to conceal, but also because of her special status as a survivor and at a very basic level, because of the physical limitations with which she

must come to terms. Her separation from her immediate family finds a corporeal expression in her new room – a remodeled sun room downstairs, away from the bedrooms occupied by the rest of the family. Nichole's first response to being moved out of the room she had previously shared with Jennie is one of anxiety, and she reflexively fears that this change is intended to make her more available, and hence more vulnerable to her father's inappropriate attentions. That fear is so immediately present, that she at first completely forgets the realistic barrier of the stairs:

> "My new room? What's wrong with the old one?" I knew what was wrong with it – it was upstairs, will all the other bedrooms and the big bathroom, and I couldn't get to it anymore. But it was mine, mine and Jennie's since she was a baby, and we were safe there, because there were two of us, and he never dared to come in there. Nothing bad had ever happened in that dark little room with the bunk beds and the clutter of all our clothes and her toys and my school stuff and pictures and posters on the walls. (163)

The new room, which Sam has renovated himself, is decorated like a princess' chamber, emphasizing Nichole's role as child in the family and expressing Sam's guilt over the incest. His awkward efforts to prepare the home for her all seem to represent an attempt to make amends as he now ceases to abuse Nichole. His daughter's disability has become an opportunity for him to reclaim the role of the "good father" that he forfeited when he began exploiting Nichole:

> The first thing I noticed, when Daddy opened the car door and pushed the wheelchair up next to it, was the ramp he'd built. It was made of wood and way too wide and sloped from the ground up to the front porch beside the regular people's steps. My very own entrance, like for a circus elephant. I pictured Daddy out there evenings after work, whistling like he does when he's got himself a new carpentry project, hammering and sawing in porchlight, feeling proud of himself – a good daddy. (161)

The awkwardness in his behavior, especially around Nichole, betrays his own vulnerability – a vulnerability that will become important when Nichole eventually extracts herself from his perfidious influence:

> "I had to widen a few doors too. You'll see," he said proudly, and he pushed me up his ramp and into the living room, like I was a new piece of furniture. Then he didn't know what to do with me, where to park me. Put me by the window, I wanted to tell him, next to the plants. But I said nothing. He was confused, and I guess I felt sorry for him. (162)

The physical separation of Nichole's room and her private ramp into the house intensifies her sense of being excluded from the family. She feels rage at her father for the abuse, rage at her mother for failing to recognize the abuse, and even rage at her two brothers – presumably for escaping the accident unscathed and for their invulnerability,

as boys, to their father's attentions. In fact, the only sense of connection she can claim to feel is with her younger sister, Jennie:

> The room made me feel like I was suddenly a tenant, like I had been eased out of the family somehow. I wanted that, though. In a way, being a tenant was perfect. Except for Jennie, I didn't want to be a member of the same family as the rest of them, and I was glad that we could never go back to being the family we had been before the accident. Glad; not happy. (165)

The connection with Jennie is motivated both by identification (as a daughter of that family), but also, perhaps, by a measure of guilt, since the end of her fathers interest in her will certainly mean the beginning of his interest in Jennie. She encourages Jennie to stay in her room downstairs, after ensuring that a lock is placed on the door:

> I wheeled my chair into the room and looked at the back of the door. "It needs a lock on the door," I said.
>
> "It does. Sure it does. A girl needs her privacy and all, right? I'll fix that up now," he said briskly, and he left the room to get his tools and a lock from his shop in the basement. (165)

Nichole also ensures that Jennie gets the lock she wanted on her own room – the room they formerly shared – "to keep the boys out," as Jennie articulates it, meaning their two brothers. Nichole naturally also includes her father among those "boys" however:

> "You got to keep the boys out," Jennie said. "I need a lock too. Mommy says I don't need one because I'm only six. But the boys are always barging in when I'm undressing and stuff."
>
> "That's right. A girl needs her privacy," I said. "Don't worry, I'll get Daddy to do it for you," I said, and she grinned and pinched me on the cheek like she was the grownup and I was the baby. (165-166)

As the family returns to its normal routine, Nichole takes refuge in her room, establishing it as a world apart by remaining ensconced in it even when the rest of the family is away at work and at school. The arrangement appears to be comfortable for Sam as well, and he buys her a television so that she need not even join the family to watch television with them in the evening:

> During the days, I pretty much had the whole house to myself, but I still stayed in my room. One night Daddy brought home a portable black-and-white TV for me that he had bought used in Ausable Forks, and he tied it into the regular cable, so I was able to watch TV then without leaving my room. (179)

The stark contrast of being the center of attention and then abruptly marginalized within the family is replicated in the community. Nichole has no outside routine and no outside contacts except at physical therapy since the accident, and by mutual agreement with the school principal, she completes the eighth grade with home study. This arrangement is not at all objectionable to the principal, who fears that Nichole's presence will serve as an

obvious reminder to the other children of the accident and cause the renewal of their traumatic symptoms. Nichole's role in the community has become that of a symbol or a living monument to the accident, rather than that of an active participant:

> Anyhow, I don't think Mr. Dillinger wanted me wheeling around school reminding everyone of the accident and the kids who had died in it. They'd hired some woman from Plattsburgh, I heard, and arranged all these special group therapy meetings and assemblies for the kids after the accident, and things had more or less returned to normal now. (177)

The arrangement also suits Nichole, who fears the awkward silences and ostracizing reactions of her classmates if she returned to school in her wheelchair. Her ambivalent sense of being both lucky and unlucky emerges here as survivor guilt, since she occupies the mediating position between the less fortunate children who perished, and the more fortunate children who were not permanently injured. At the same time, Nichole will certainly enflame the survivor guilt of those children who must look at her and feel that they are "fortunate," giving her fear that they will react in a rejecting manner a solid basis in reality:

> I didn't want them to stop what they were doing or saying when I rolled up in my wheelchair, "Hi, guys, what's up?" I knew what I'd look like to them, how they'd all go silent for a minute when the dweeb arrived and then change the subject not to embarrass her or make her feel bad because they were talking about something

> she couldn't do, like dancing or sports or just hanging out. Poor Nichol, the cripple. That's the best I'd get from them – pity. And no matter how many of those group therapy sessions they'd been to, everyone would see me and instantly think of the kids who weren't there anymore, the kids who had not been lucky like me, and maybe they would hate me for it. And I wouldn't blame them. (177)

Nichole has already experienced this loss of a mutually shared apprehension of reality in the dwindling visits from her former friends. Ultimately, these awkward visits cease altogether in the awareness that not only do Nichole and her former friends occupy different realities, but the mutual interest in one another is thereby diminished. Nichole herself expresses no desire to try and return to her former identity and role in the community:

> […] it was always self-conscious and embarrassing, especially with the kids my age, my friends, so called, and I knew they could hardly wait to leave, and I was glad myself when they did. Then only my best friend, Jody Plante, and one or two others, when they could get someone to drive them over, came to visit, and that was okay. But by the time I left the hospital to come home, I had pretty much run out of things to talk about with them. We were living in different worlds now, and they couldn't know about mine, and I didn't want to know about theirs anymore. (178)

Each of the divisions of Nichole's subjectivity that I have mentioned – whether lucky or unlucky, whether the object of abuse or the object of desire, or whether the center of attention or marginalized – finds expression in a single opposition; whether Nichole is a helpless victim, or a nomothete who authors shared symbolic meaning. Nichole's family has a stake in her identity as helpless victim who, necessarily, is completely malleable to their will and who allows herself to be manipulated. The most obvious way in which this is demanded of her is in Sam's expectation that she will tolerate his inappropriate attentions without acting to put a stop to them, in particular by telling someone about the abuse. In taking the risk he does, which could destroy his family and even lead to criminal prosecution, Sam bargains with Nichole's compliance and her willingness to view herself as a helpless victim.

It is not only Sam who expects Nichole to take on the role of the helpless victim, but rather, both parents take a somewhat exploitive and proprietary view of Nichole. Before the accident, Sam and Mary basked in the praise of the community for Nichole's achievements, and they lived, in a sense, vicariously through her, promoting her in order to obtain the social admiration they desire for themselves. This kind of self-serving interest might be difficult to distinguish from ordinary parental support and the desire to see one's children do well. After the accident, they readjust themselves and exploit the community's perception of Nichole as a tragic victim to create an almost beatified image of their own identity. Unlike their previous use of her, this form of exploitation is a bit more obvious. In a critical episode, Nichole is asked to read an essay she has written

about the founder of the town as a salutatorian speech at graduation, on the condition that she sanitize the essay to make it more laudatory:

> I had written a research paper for English on Sam Dent, the man the town was named after, and had received an A+ for it, and Mr. Dillinger and Mrs. Crosby, the English teacher, said that with a little revising it would make a perfect salutatorian's speech. The way they wanted me to revise it, I knew without their even saying, was to turn Sam Dent into an example for the kids who were graduating, which meant that I'd have to cut out all the bad things he'd done like cheating the Indians out of their land and buying his way out of the Civil War things that lots of people did in those days but that were just as bad as they would be now. (188-189)

The hypocrisy of this request is uncomfortably echoed in the parents' request that she should attend the graduation and give the speech. Certainly, they had not insisted that she actually return to school and attend with her classmates, and Nichole accurately recognizes that her parents' motivation is that they themselves will be the center of attention:

> "C'mon, Babes," Dad said. "You'll be the star of the show."
>
> "Some star," I said. "What you mean is, you and Mom'll be the stars of the show!" That was the main reason I didn't want to do it. (189)

While in the past, Nichole had tolerated their manipulative exploitation of her, making her the center of attention as a way of thrusting themselves into the limelight as well, Nichole finds that she is no longer willing to participate in their use of her. The crisis created by the accident and having to come to terms with her disability gives Nichole the positive impetus to question her helplessness in other arenas of life. In consequence, she resolves to begin acting on her own motivation for her own benefit:

> No, the reason I was dead set on avoiding the graduation ceremonies was because Mom and Daddy were so dead set on getting me to do it and because they wanted it for themselves, not me. They didn't realize that, of course, but I did. Sometimes I almost felt sorry for them, the way they desperately needed me to be a star, and that's why in the past, before the accident, I had always given in to them. But no more. Now I only did what I wanted to do, for my reasons. (189)

It is at the moment of her refusal to participate in her parents' exploitive use of her that Sam and Mary Burnell show the full measure of their selfish motivation, by stating their intention to attend Nichole's graduation without her, even going as far as to get dressed up for the event before finally abandoning their plan. They are too unaware of their own distorted motivations to realize how embarrassing it *should* be for them to attend their daughter's graduation without her. As she explains to them, it would make them look pathetic, rather than noble:

> At the last minute, Mom and Daddy almost went to the graduation ceremonies without me, just the two of them, all dressed up, but I talked them out of it. It was a stupid idea, but typical of them. They couldn't bear being kept out of the limelight.
>
> "It's not the same as going to church every Sunday without me," I explained, "where people feel sorry for me and proud of you. People at school will just think you're dumb and will feel sorry for you instead of me," I said. (199)

The most crass instance of Sam and Mary's proprietary use of Nichole is, of course, the class negligence suit itself, in which Nichole is to appear as Mitchell Stephens's star witness. The parent's interest in the suit is first and foremost in the money they will receive from a settlement, essentially placing a gross, monetary value on their daughter's anatomy and on what they perceive that they have lost in reflected glory with the loss of her ability to walk:

> […] I sat there for a minute, looking at my dumb worthless legs reflected in the window glass. They looked like they belonged to someone else. How much had they been worth a year ago, I wondered. Or last fall, at the Keene Valley game and the Harvest Ball afterwards, when Bucky Waters and I, with crowns on our heads, danced in the gym in front of the whole school? And to whom? That was the real question. To me, my legs were worth

everything then and nothing now. But to Mom and Daddy, nothing then and a couple of million dollars now. (187)

This sudden emphasis on Nichole's great misfortune and on the enormity of her tragic role conflicts with her parents' prior assertions of how lucky she is, in particular when compared with the fourteen children who died. The manipulation of her status as victim, the rehearsed quality of her parents' lines, and the incongruity of her experience of the trauma compared with the "ethical" address of it in the suit is at once apparent to Nichole, who has developed a keen ability to spot hypocrisy:

I hate these kinds of conversations, like everyone but me knows the lines and has been rehearsing the scene without me.

Daddy sighed. "It's because of the accident," he said. "A lot of people in the town whose kids were on the bus have got lawyers, because of the accident. Thank god we didn't lose you, but a lot of people… well, you know. People in town are very, very angry," he said. "Us included. There's been a lot of grief here. People lost their children, Babes."

"Yeah, but you didn't lose me!"

"No, honey," Mom said. "And we will thank the Lord for that every day and night for the rest of our lives. But you… you almost died, and you were badly injured, and you won't be… you can't…"

"I can't walk anymore." I said it for her.

> "Well, that's… that's a terrible loss," Daddy said. "To you, especially,' he said. 'But to all of us." (168)

Unlike Mitchell or her parents, Nichole is not satisfied with an "ethical" narrative of the trauma that is useful, and that will result in pecuniary rewards, and instead, she desires a narrative that reflects the truth of her experience. The narrative that Mitchell constructs for the case is not motivated by the *experience* of trauma or by epistemic crisis that disrupts identity. It is a utilitarian narrative in which it is more important that it be *believable*, than that it be true. (Traumatic experience, by its very nature, violates the structures of symbolized meaning and therefore a true and accurate expression of trauma is likely to be less believable to those outside the experience than the "ethical narrative" imposed upon it.) From Nichole's perspective, the "ethical narrative" of the accident proposed by Mitchell is abhorrent, and her parents' decision to sue violates the interpretation of her loss that they had previously proposed – namely, that she should view herself as being very fortunate both for having survived and for not remembering the accident. Nichole's survival and loss of memory has become her parent's good fortune in the amount of money an injured survivor can garner – in particular one who cannot remember enough to contradict the story cobbled together by their lawyer:

> It just wasn't right – to be alive, to have had what people assured you was a close call, and then go out and hire a lawyer; it wasn't right. And even if you were the mother and father of one of the kids who had died, like the Ottos or the Walkers, what good would it do to hire a lawyer? To sue, because your child had died in an

> accident, and then collect a bunch of money from the state – it was understandable, yet somehow it didn't seem right, either. But to be the mother and father of one of the kids who had survived the accident, even a kid like me, who would spend the rest of her life as a cripple, and then to sue – I didn't understand that at all, and I really knew it wasn't right. Not if I was, like they said, truly lucky. (171)

Although the legal suit frames its approach to the tragedy in ethical terms, that approach is inherently immoral. It is, in other words, a conscious manipulation of the truth surrounding the accident to create a social apprehension of the event, through which a few people benefit. Any collective address of trauma will naturally require a compromise that reaffirms the boundaries of the social entity. As I mentioned in the previous section, Mitchell Stephens construction of his apprehension of the accident serves the interests of outsiders like himself, who might benefit by the designation of a perpetrator such as the school bus manufacturer or state's highway bureau. Sanctions against such a "perpetrator," however unfounded, together with the promise that shortcomings will be rectified, in turn, increases the sense of security for those most peripherally affected by the tragedy – that is, whose who learn about it indirectly, and for whom the realization that such an accident *could* happen is unsettling. Mitchell finds a secondary satisfaction in the monetary rewards of such a case as well, and in his ability to secure the cooperation of locals such as Nichole's parents with the promise of pecuniary compensation.

Nichole, as both a survivor of the accident and as a member of the community of Sam Dent, is motivated by far different interests. Although it is not yet apparent to her what ramifications the suit will have for the community as a whole, it is clear that the suit will not address the truth that she, Dolores, and Billy perceive – that the crash was a terrible and random accident resulting from the unfortunate intersection of contributing factors that can neither be predicted, nor controlled:

> […] Mr. Stephens was going on about how tough it would be for me to answer some of the questions those other lawyers would ask. "They work for the people we're trying to sue, you understand, and their job is to try to minimize the damages. Our job, Nichole, is to try to maximize the damages,' he explained. 'If you think of it that way, as people doing their jobs, no good guys and no bad guys, just our side and the other side, then it'll go easier for you."
>
> No one was interested in the truth, was what he was saying. Because the truth was that it was an accident, that's all, and no one was to blame. "I won't lie," I told him. (185-186)

Nichole's refusal to allow herself to be manipulated and her refusal to lie for her parents' or Mr. Mitchell's sake brings together the trauma of the bus accident and the trauma of incest, in which she has also been forced to allow herself to be manipulated and required to remain silent about her experience. Turning from Mr. Stephens, she looks at her father

and repeats her refusal, letting him know that she can no longer be used to serve his personal objectives:

> "No matter what they ask me," I said, "I'll tell the truth," and I looked straight at Daddy, who had taken a seat next to Mom on the sofa. He studied his tea when I said that, as if he had seen a fly in it. I knew what he was thinking, and he knew what I was thinking too. (186)

The trauma of incest is brought to a point of crisis by the trauma that Nichole suffers in the bus accident and afterwards, as she comes to terms with her disability. The resolution she eventually works out for that more immediate trauma, in turn, will provide her with a resolution for the deeper trauma of the incest. Nichole's experience with and bitterness over having been manipulated and used in the past makes her uniquely immune to Mitchell's attempts to manipulate and seduce her. She recognizes it at once, although she does not immediately refuse to participate in the suit, feeling reassured that nothing she says will harm anyone on the community or result in anyone being blamed unfairly:

> Of course, he was also afraid that I would refuse to go along with their lawsuit. I still hadn't agreed to do it, not in so many words, but in my mind I had decided to go ahead and say what they wanted me to say, which they insisted was only to answer Mr. Stephens's and the other lawyer's questions truthfully. That couldn't hurt anything, I figured, because the truth was, I didn't really remember anything about the actual accident, so nothing I

> said could be used to blame anybody for it. It was an accident, that's all. Accidents happen. (181)

At the same time, Mitchell Stephens's attempt to put Nichole on the witness stand places her in a position of unique power – a power she has never before had in her dealings with adults. For the first time in her life, Nichole has power over her father, who had so abused his power over her in the past. She has become the nomothete who apprehends a reality beyond shared symbolized meaning, and who therefore is separate from and able to create meaning, rather than merely adhering to it as a victim. She has, in a sense, acquired the power of the perpetrator who can transgress the law, and in so doing, demonstrates that he is more powerful than the law. The narrative of the accident that Nichole creates has the capacity to shape the community's apprehension of that tragedy. Nichole has been given an opportunity to reject the failed morality of her parents, and to create a morality of her own, however difficult it might be to choose the "right" thing to do:

> The whole thing, even though I liked Mr. Stephens and trusted him, made me feel greedy and dishonest. I looked at my picture of Einstein. What would he have done, if he'd been in the accident and been lucky like me? (187)

Nichole certainly cannot look to her parents for guidance in choosing the right thing to do. She finds someone, however, who represents the morality of the "good father" in Billy Ansel, for whom she had previously babysat, and whom she finds to be a truly laudable individual. Indeed, the comparison of Billy as the "good father" with Sam as the "bad father" is made painfully evident by the fact that Sam most often molested

Nichole in the car when picking her up after babysitting at Billy's. These two figures representing kinds of fathering are juxtaposed against one another again within the context of the law suit. The contrast between the two is made most apparent when Billy visits the Burnells, hoping to dissuade them from going through with the case. Despite her positive feelings for Billy, it is painful for Nichole to face him after the accident and the deaths of Jessica and Mason, whom she used to baby-sit. In light of the loss of his children, Nichole experiences a particularly strong sense of survivor guilt towards him, and hides in her room so that he won't see her and be reminded of the accident, and the happier times before, when their common objective was the care of his children:

> In the last couple of years, after Billy's wife died, I had become his kids' regular baby-sitter, and now they were gone too. Maybe I was stuck in a wheelchair and all, but I sure wasn't dead, like his twins, so the idea of him seeing me made me cringe with shame. I didn't want to be seen by *anyone* whose kids had been killed in the accident, but especially not Billy Ansel. (191)

Hidden in the doorway to her room, Nichole is able to hear the heated debate between Billy and her parents over the suit. There, she finally gets a true insight both into her parents true motivations, and into the devastating repercussions that the suit will have on the community in which she has grown up. The doubts she has entertained as to the morality of such a suit are given a voice by Billy, and therefore find validation in at least a part of the discursive community of her town. Her parents, on the other hand, pushed

buy another adult to provide justification for their actions betray the lack of thought invested in the truth of what happened the morning the bus went off the road:

> "Yeah, so? Lots of folks have got lawyers."
>
> "But yours is the one who's gonna subpoena me, Sam. Force me to testify in court. He came by the garage this afternoon, real smooth and friendly."
>
> "Why would he do that?" Mom said. "You didn't have anything to do with the accident." She's so out of it. Even I knew that Billy had been driving behind the bus that day, so he could wave at his kids, like he always did. That made him the only person not on the bus who'd actually witnessed the accident, which meant that he'd be the one to tell if Dolores had been driving safely. They naturally couldn't sue anybody if Dolores was driving recklessly, and only Billy knew the truth about that. (193-194)

The claim made by Mitchell Stephens and Nichole's parents that the suit will not harm anyone in the town, is belied by Billy, who reveals how the various lawsuits led by different lawyers are tearing the community of Sam Dent apart, providing material gain to the few at the cost of the many. The integrity of the social fabric that binds them and that makes a community of the town is endangered. The suits being filed have led into the absurd, with people even suing over the distribution of donations made to the town by well-wishers:

> Billy said, "A couple of local folks I won't bother to name – but you know them, Sam, they're friends of yours – they've even started a suit against the school board, because they're not happy with the way they decided to use the money that got collected around town last winter and the junk that people sent in from all over." (195)

The greed that has seized the townspeople knows almost no bounds. Some townspeople have even proposed suing the rescue squad, whose efforts saved the lives of many of the children, including Nichole, demonstrating that no good deed will go unpunished as long as there is gain to be had:

> "Yesterday," he said, "I heard somebody wants to sue the rescue squad, for Christ's sake. The *rescue* squad. Because they supposedly didn't act fast enough." (195)

Like Nichole, Billy has two primary interests in the resolution of trauma as someone who was close enough to the accident to be directly affected (both in the death of his children and in the fact that he witnessed the tragedy). On the one hand, he must deal with the individual experience of trauma and the destruction of meaning brought about by the devastating loss of his children in an accident that defies the establishment of valid causality and culpability. On the other hand, his social interest is in the town and its preservation as an essential social entity. In approaching the Burnells, Billy appeals to their social sense and to the role they have played in the town as he asks them to help him restore a sense of community by dropping their suit. Sam and Mary Burnell's response

shocks even Nichole, who is otherwise familiar with their lack of reflection and self-serving motivations.

> "If you two could make a smart shyster lawyer like Stephens pull out, then maybe the other people in town would start to see the light and people can get their mourning done properly and get on with their lives. This has become a hateful place to live, Sam. Hateful."
>
> "Not for us," Daddy said.
>
> "No, not for us," Mom chimed in.
>
> What a dumb thing for them to say. It shocked even me. (196)

It is clear that Sam and Mary's motivations are so selfish and self-serving, that they are either wholly unaware of the fragmentation of the community, or they do not care. The worst of their motivations – their greed together with their ability to put a monetary value on their daughter – comes to the fore as Sam claims that whatever the consequences to the community as a whole, their need for money takes precedence:

> "No, Billy. We can't drop the lawsuit," Daddy said. "I shouldn't have to tell you, because I run a pretty good tab at your garage, but we need the money, Billy. For hospital bills and suchlike. Just for living." (196)

There is a stark disparity between this greedy attitude in which there is a sense that money *can* provide adequate compensation for the suffering of their child, and Billy's own grief over Jessica and Mason, in the face of which money has no meaning. In a

powerful expression of what it means to be the "good father," Billy even offers to pay Nichole's hospital bills himself in order to placate the Burnell's greed and safeguard the integrity of their community. Even this is not enough for Mary and Sam however. In that moment when Nichole realizes how little grief her parents experience – the way in which they are essentially failing to "know" what she suffers and using her for their own advancement – she also experiences a hatred of her parents. With that hatred, comes the separation she needs to realize a sense of what she, herself, believes is moral and right:

> At that moment, I hated my parents more than I ever had. I hated them for all that had gone before – Daddy for what he knew and had done, and Mom for what she didn't know and hadn't done – but I also hated them for this new thing, this awful lawsuit. The lawsuit was wrong. Purely and in God's eyes, as Mom especially should know, it was wrong; but also it was making Billy Ansel sadder than life had already done on its own, and that seemed stupid and cruel; and now it looked like half the people in town were doing it too, making everyone around them crazy with pain, the same as Mom and Daddy were doing to Billy, so they didn't have to face their own pain and get over it. (197)

That moment of realization frees Nichole from acting to please her parents and will ultimately allow her to establish new boundaries in that relationship based on an adult's awareness of self, rather than a child's need to keep her parents well disposed towards her. That separation from her parents and awareness of her own power has been

growing, however, since her return from the hospital, as Nichole realizes the true criminality of her father's actions and what he has taken from her:

> I looked at him, though, I looked right into him. I had changed since the accident, and not just in my body, and he knew it. His secret was mine, now; I owned it. It used to be like I shared it with him, but no more. Before, everything had been fluid and changing and confused, but me not knowing for sure what had happened or who was to blame. But now I saw him as a thief, just a sneaky little thief in the night who had robbed his own daughter of what was supposed to be permanently hers – like he had robbed me of my soul or something, whatever it was that Jennie still had and I didn't. And then the accident robbed me of my body. (180)

Nichole begins to understand that unshared knowledge can bring with it immense power. The pleasure that Sam has stolen from her – of which he deprived her, and upon which he lays an illegitimate claim – have come at a great cost to him. Nichole has become the repository not only of he own most terrible secret, but of her father's most terrible secret as well. Indeed, in the wake of the accident, she has the impression that this secret is all that is left to her of value:

> No, the only truly valuable thing that I owned now happened to be Daddy's worst secret, and I meant to hold onto it. It was like I carried it is a locked box on my lap, with the key held tightly in my

> hand and it made him afraid of me. Every time he saw me looking at him hard, he trembled. (180)

The trauma of the bus accident is closely tied to Nichole's situation with her father and her realization of the power that she possesses to create her family's reality by either concealing or revealing the secret of her father's abuse. She realizes in the first instance, that trauma separates people in their own separate apprehension of reality, turning one member of a family against another, and turning one member of a community against another:

> I knew it was all connected to what had happened between me and Daddy before the accident, and through that to the accident itself, which had changed me and my view of everyone else, and now from the accident to this lawsuit – which had set Mom and Daddy against me, although they didn't know that yet, and me against everyone. (198)

Nichole witnesses a manipulation of shared reality both in the incest and in the accident – by the suppression of certain facts or awareness, and the stressing of other facts or awareness. That manner of manipulation splits covalent traumatic experience so that it can be fit into the clear-cut categories of social discourse. That perception that she is "lucky" is arbitrarily inverted for the lawsuit, in which she must play the consummate victim. Similarly, she is expected to remain the silent victim of the sexual abuse between "incidents," even as she is being asked to play an active role in co-authoring the fantasy that Sam creates while using her. In each of these contradictory instances, a narrative of

the trauma (and of Nichole's identity) is created to serve a specific social purpose not because it is *true*, but because it is mutually *comprehensible* and therefore *believable*. Both narratives of the accident – that Nichole is a fortunate survivor and an unfortunate victim – reflect a solution to shared, collective trauma that eliminates the ambivalence that characterizes the unmediated *experience* of trauma. Nichole's experience is that her fortune is ambivalent – with good luck and bad luck linked in a covalent bond such that they can neither be merged, nor separated, as she realizes through her interaction with other traumatized individuals at the rehabilitation center. Her experience of trauma has given her a sublime understanding of how "ambiguous" experience is in the face of often falsifying and concretizing symbolized expressions of experience:

> […] Mom had been carting me over to Lake Placid for physical therapy at the Olympic Center, where there were lots of kids and young people who were even worse off than I was, and some of them had made friends with me, so I was beginning to see myself in the world a little clearer by then. I didn't feel so abnormal anymore, and I didn't worry so much about whether I was lucky or unlucky. I was both, like most people. (189)

At home, Nichole has the capacity to create a definitive narrative of her family's life by revealing or concealing her father's secret, thereby creating either a happy family or a divided family. This same capacity is mirrored in the legal suit. She alone among the survivors of the crash will be called to testify, and she alone has been given the power to shape the narrative that will either enable the suit to succeed, or cause it to fail. This

power gives Nichole a dual benefit, since she can testify in such a way that she eliminates any basis for the suit, thereby preserving the integrity of the community's social fabric (a *moral* decision that puts the common good above personal gain), and she can demonstrate to her father that she is both capable and willing to work against his interests in the pursuit of what is moral. Her father, as she wryly notes, will now precisely what this gesture means:

> I suddenly realized that I myself – and not Daddy and Mom or the Walkers or the Ottos – could force Mr. Stephens to drop the lawsuit. I could force their big shot lawyer to walk away from the case. And Daddy would know that I did it. Which would give me a good laugh. And because of what I knew about him, he wouldn't be able to do a thing about it afterwards. It wouldn't really matter, but maybe then we could become a regular family again. Husband and wife, parents and children, brothers and sisters, all of us trusting one another, with no secrets.
>
> Except the big one, of course. Which would always be there, no matter what I did, like a huge purple birthmark on my face, something that he alone would see whenever he looked at me, and I, whenever I looked in the mirror. (198 - 199)

By utilizing the suit to place her father "on notice" in a manner of speaking, Nichole can ensure both her own and her sister Jennie's safety, by tacitly allowing her father to purchase her silence with that safety.

The decision to thwart the suit is a mature decision, and an elegant solution both for her situation of abuse, and for the fragmentation of her community. In choosing her own morality, rejecting her parents hypocritical and essentially failed "ethics," Nichole reaches adulthood – a transformation in her identity of which she herself is consciously aware:

> Those summer mornings and afternoons alone in the house with Jennie were, in a way, the last days of my childhood; that's how it felt, even at the time it was happening to me. (201)

Nichole is in a unique position to achieve such transformation precisely because, as an adolescent, she is at an age in life in which a dramatic alteration of subjectivity and the integration of a more evolved view of life are expected. The changes that she undergoes in response to her traumatic experience can be partially subsumed under the monumental changes that accompany the transition into adulthood. Having existed in a state of divided "reality" and identity that is deemed "natural" by society (i.e. adolescence), Nichole is perhaps better equipped to accept the fact that meaning and identity change with experience.

Nichole carries out her plan with a calm resolution that causes even the jaded Mr. Stephens to later remark: "You'd make a great poker player, kid" (215). She arrives at the deposition by the opposing lawyers and finds that, as she anticipated, she has been summoned to appear as an essentially mute victim, rendered more a piece of evidence that a living witness as a result of her loss of memory:

> I guess I was Mr. Stephens's choice witness, Exhibit A or something, and they figured there wasn't much they could ask me that would help their case. They knew the facts already, and I was obviously exactly what I looked like, a poor teenaged kid in a wheelchair, a victim – and that served only Mr. Stephens's purpose, and of course Mom's and Daddy's purpose, and the Walkers' and the Ottos.' (206)

Completely blindsiding Mitchell Stephens, she claims that as she is deposed and as she talks, her memory is unexpectedly returning. With Nichole already in the midst of giving her deposition, there is essentially nothing that Mitchell can do to arrest the runaway course that his case has taken. He is reduced to voicing weak objections to his own witness's testimony as Nichole single-handedly creates the dominant narrative of the accident:

> "You remember that much," he said. Like, How interesting.
>
> "Yes. As I'm talking, I'm remembering more about it." And I really was, which surprised me probably as much as it was surprising the lawyers.
>
> Mr. Stephens looked worried. "Note my objection. She said, 'As I'm talking.'" (212)

The way in which Nichole stops the suit closely resembles the way in which she stops the sexual abuse at home – by concealing the truth, and creating a narrative that preserves the unity of the discursive community. Her resolution to her traumatic crisis is

to preserve the knowledge for herself that every individual is held in his or her own perception of reality, and that even her community is held in a social reality that differs from that of other social entities. Just as Nichole elects to keep Sam's secret in exchange for being once again a "regular family," Nichole keeps the truth of the accident to herself: "It was an accident, that's all. Accidents happen" (181). In both instances, the truth will permanently destroy the discursive community (rather then disrupt), in the former case, that of Nichole's family, and in the latter, that of her community, the town of Sam Dent. Instead of asserting her own truth, that the accident is not subject to rational understanding by taking refuge in causality and culpability, she creates a story that, like Mitchell's case, is believable, if not absolutely true. It is a pragmatic story constructed not to obtain the greatest gain for anyone, but to do the least harm, by placing the blame on Dolores, whom it would be pointless to prosecute or sue. She sacrifices Dolores, in other words, for the sake of the larger community:

> Mr. Schwartz went on, "Well, then, what else did you observe at that time? Before the actual accident, I mean."
>
> "I was scared."
>
> "You were scared? Of what? This is *before* the accident, I mean."
>
> "Yes, I understand. Dolores was driving too fast, and it scared me."
>
> "Mrs. Driscoll was driving too fast? What made you think that, Nichole?"

"The speedometer. And it was downhill there."

"You could see the speedometer?"

"Yes, I looked, because it was snowing so hard. And because it seemed to me that we were going very fast coming down the hill there. I was scared." Mr. Stephens, I noticed, had gone silent. (213)

The lie that Nichole tells is a lie that no one will contradict. Certainly Billy Ansel will not, since as Nichole is already aware, his interest too, is in the preservation of community. Nichole has found a transcendent solution to the problem of trauma, by realizing that trauma creates separate realities, and that those realities cannot be united. These were divided not by the accident, but by the secrets that each individual must keep, by his or her own traumatic experiences, and the divisions of subjectivity to which each individual is vulnerable. At the same time, public discourse must give the appearance that it arises out of a shared symbolized field of meaning to which all members more or less subscribe. The narrative of trauma in a discursive community must, above all, be believable to its participants, whatever their underlying apprehension of meaning (i.e. Idiolect). The solution that Nichole finds provides a narrative that serves the interests of her town, her own community. She nevertheless retains an awareness of the disparity of individual apprehensions of that narrative, just as she recognizes the disparity in the opposing lawyers', her father's, and in Mitchell Stephens's apprehension of the narrative she produces in the deposition:

Daddy would have concluded by now that I had lied, however, and he would try to tell that to Mr. Stephens. She lied, Mitch, she

> doesn't remember anything about the accident, she has no idea how fast Dolores was going. And Mr. Stephens would have to point out to him that, Sam, it doesn't matter whether she was lying or not, the lawsuit is dead, *everyone's* lawsuit is dead. Forget it. Tell the others to forget it. It's over. Right now, Sam, the thing you got to worry about is *why* she lied. A kid who'd do that to her own father is not normal, Sam.
>
> But Daddy knew why I had lied. He knew who was normal and who wasn't. Mr. Stephens couldn't ever know the truth, but Daddy always would. (216)

This ability to comprehend the disparity between each individual's apprehension of meaning and reality enables Nichole to live with what is heterogeneous in her own experience, while at the same time supporting a shared apprehension as a pragmatically based compromise. In so doing, she is able to mediate between individual traumatic crisis (her own) and collective traumatic crisis, thereby ending the stalemate between opposing traumatic process and finding a suitable resolution for her own traumatic crisis, both in response to the accident, and prior existing trauma. Unlike the perpetrator who transgresses against the law in order to exploit and destroy the social unity, Nichole, as the nomothete, is able to transgress against the 'law' (both juristically and in the sense of the loss of meaning – *logos*) in order to ensure that social unity.

Nichole's calculated move also resolves her father's traumatic crisis, and restores her family's unity in much the same way that it restores the community's unity. Now

protected from her father's abuse by the ability to reveal the truth, she and her father construct a narrative of family unity in which Nichole is once again restored to her role as child – a role that, ironically, she is only able to reclaim by truly becoming an adult. What she and her father now share, aside from their terrible secrets, is nothing more than what is appropriate for a daughter and her father:

> Finally, he reached forward and put the key into he ignition, and speaking slowly, he said in a strange half-dead voice, "Well, Nichole, what do you say we stop at Stewart's for an ice cream? We haven't done that for a long time," he added.
>
> "That sounds fine, Daddy. I'd really like it."
>
> He started the car up then and drove across the road to Stewart's and brought each of us a huge pistachio cone, which is the kind we both like best but that no one else in the family likes. (217)

In the secrets that they share, which includes both the incest and the lie that Nichole told at the deposition, Nichole and her father share something very profound – the truth about both traumas that had to be concealed in order to restore social unity. As they arrive home, they have one last, oblique exchange about these two secrets before reentering the family circle and taking up the "believable narrative" that will enable the family to function as a unity. In that exchange, and in that shared truth, there is ultimately reconciliation:

As we pulled into the yard, I said to Daddy, “Nothing will happen to Dolores will it?”

He shut off the engine, and we sat there for a moment in silence, listening to the dashboard clock tick. Finally, he said, “No. Nobody wants to sue Dolores. She’s one of us.”

“Will the police do anything to her now?”

“It’s too late for that. Dolores can’t drive the school bus anymore, anyhow; the school board saw to that right off. I doubt she even wants to. Everyone knows she’s suffered plenty.”

“But everyone will blame her now, won’t they?”

“Most will, yes. Those that don’t know the truth will blame Dolores. People have got to have somebody to blame, Nichole.”

“But we know the truth,’ I said. ‘Don’t we?”

“Yes,” he said, and for the first time since before the accident, he looked me straight in the face. “We know the truth, Nichole. You and I.” His large blue eyes had filled with sorrowful tears, and his whole face seemed to beg for forgiveness. (219-220)

Here, Nichole’s account ends with the resolution of traumatic crisis worked out in private. How the town finds a resolution for shared, social trauma will be the focus of the last chapter of the novel.

5.3 Dolores Driscoll: The Resolution of Collective Trauma

The final chapter of *The Sweet Hereafter* returns to Dolores Driscoll's narrative, and covers the period of time shortly after Mitchell Stephens's lawsuit has been brought to an abrupt halt, and with it, the lawsuits of everyone in town. The narrative does more than give us a sense of how Dolores ultimately comes to terms with her own traumatic crisis. Rather, it also provides us with a concise view both of how the town as a whole resolves its collective trauma, and of the balance that is struck between the individual trauma (which demands that heterogeneous experience be signified) and of collective trauma (which demands that the basis of shared signification be left intact). In this last chapter, the narrative focuses on a single event – a demolition derby at the Sam Dent County Fair – and stresses the reciprocal relationship between Dolores, who had been a lynchpin of the town's social network before the accident, and Nichole Burnell, who becomes the center around which the discursive community reforms in the aftermath.

The county fair and in particular, the demolition derby, marks the first time that Dolores has participated in a community event, with the sole exception of the children's funerals, which Dolores discretely attended. Dolores's attendance at those funerals was a part of her own private traumatic process; a last interaction with the children whom she has lost as she seeks closure:

> We were cheerful, though, Abbott and I; it was our first time out in public together since last winter. After the accident, I had attended the funerals, but alone, without even Abbott to accompany me; it was a way of bearing witness, I guess you could call it. I kept to

> myself, spoke to no one, and left immediately after the services. It was just something I had to do, something crucial between me and the children. (224)

Dolores attended these funerals quietly, sitting at the back and leaving before the service was completed in order to avoid any personal encounter. The citizens of Sam Dent, in turn, ignored her presence, acknowledging her need and her right to attend those funerals, while at the same time grappling with their own confusion over how to perceive her new role in the community. As we learned from Mitchell Stephens's narrative, the town, like Dolores, is unable to establish her relative guilt or innocence in the accident. Their avoidance of her is a necessary part of their own mourning process.

Dolores's own perception as to why she attended the funerals is that it had a personal significance; something shared with the children who, like her, make up the circle of individuals most immediately affected by the accident. Dolores's trauma is wholly unique because of her unique involvement in that tragedy. She does not precisely share the same experience as the children on the bus, however unlike the adults in town who lost children, Dolores experienced the crash itself. In this sense, the people who share her experience are off limits to her, either because they died, or because Dolores no longer sees them. Attending the funerals is the closest she can come to being with and communing with someone who, like her, actually experienced the accident itself. At the same time, Mitchell correctly identified the difficult nature of Dolores post-accident relationship with the town. As he observes, her quiet attendance at the funerals

constitutes Dolores's tacit attempt to place herself in their midst, testing the judgment of the town as to her future identity in the community:

> But she wasn't having any of that. Silently, with her head bowed, Dolores was plunking herself down in the exact center of the town's grief and rage, compelling them by her presence at these funerals to define her. Was she a victim of the tragedy, or was she the cause of it? She had placed herself on the scales of their judgment, but they did not want to judge her. To them, she was both, of course, victim *and* cause; just as to herself she was both. Like every parent when something terrible happens to his child, Dolores was innocent, and she was guilty. We knew which, in the eyes of God and our fellowman, *we* were, despite the fact that most of the time we felt like both; but she did not. Denial was impossible for her, so she wanted us to come forward and do the job for her. (143-144)

These quiet and unobtrusive forays into the community precede, but closely resemble her attendance now at the county fair, where Dolores will finally discover the role she is to play in Sam Dent. Although Dolores does not yet know it, the town's collective ambivalence towards her was resolved after Nichole's testimony, with the "news" quietly filtering through the social networks that Dolores "had been speeding" at the time of the accident, and that this "reckless behavior" had been the reason she had lost control of the bus. Although Nichole's story is a fabrication, it is nevertheless

believable; in some ways, easier to accept and believe than the truth that there is no clear cause of the accident. The lie "saved the town" in that it provided a clear, "ethical" explanation for the tragedy that simultaneously resolved the question as to Dolores innocence or guilt. Ultimately for the town, it is the loss of meaning and not the loss of the children that creates *crisis* (as opposed to grief). (This is distinct from the grief that the childrens' immediate families feel at the loss of their children.)

The unresolved fluctuation of Dolores's identity across a division that straddles an essential, ethical issue (what constitutes a victim and what constitutes a perpetrator) disrupts the semiotic current in all domains, including the Communicative domain. There, the inability to establish whether Dolores is at fault for the accident undermines the basis for shared signification, dissolving the discursive community. Indeed, the fragmentation created by collective trauma and exacerbated by the many lawsuits that were filed or proposed, has had a profound impact on the town. As Dolores notes, "significant pain isolates you." In the period of time just following Nichole's "revelation," the town has not yet formed a collective response to the trauma:

> All over town there were empty houses and trailers for sale that last winter had been homes with families in them. A town needs its children, just as much and in the same way as a family does. It comes undone without them, turns a community into a windblown scattering of isolated individuals. Take the Ottos. With Bear gone, it was hard to imagine the two of them together. Significant pain isolates you anyhow, but under certain circumstances, it may be all

> you've got, and after great loss, you must use whatever's left, even if it isolates you from everyone else. (236-237)

Dolores has been isolated by the tragedy, in part because she, like everyone else in the town, needs a period of time in which to "process" the accident and her grief. That period of time represents the time needed to allow her personal experience of the tragedy to find its way through the organizational domains, and to come to terms with the changes to subjectivity that the experience demands. The accident violated expectation, being something that was extrinsic to prior experience. As a result, the semiotic current is altered (a current that itself *is* subjectivity), and accordingly, the structure of the organizational domains must be altered, as must identity as it is expressed in Idiolect. Dolores's identity as she had previously known it has perished with the children:

> I was very lonely in those days, still in a kind of shock from the accident, I think, and Abbott was the only person I could communicate with. But soon winter passed over, and spring appeared and rolled on a few weeks later, and then it was summer, and now in late summer I had begun to feel more like my old self – although I knew, of course, that I would never be the same person again. You can't raise the dead. I knew that. (226)

Coming to terms with the changes in subjectivity as it is shaped in the Epistemic, Ethical, Idiolectic and Narrative domains is a large part of dealing with traumatic crisis. What remains, is to deal with changes as they must occur in the Communicative domain, which is to say, the changes that will occur in the way in which the discursive community

defines Dolores's identity. Those changes will necessarily be reflected in social mirroring – how her fellow townspeople react to her; as well as which aspects of the identity that she asserts they will validate and which they will censor. In whatever way she ultimately comes to terms with her own traumatic crisis, the matter of whether or not Dolores will be able to return as a part of that community will depend upon the compatibility of her perception of herself with the perception of her around which the community finally unites. In a very literal sense, Dolores has already experienced her own expulsion from the community in the loss of her job not only as the town's bus driver (which she anticipated), but as a assistant mail carrier as well (which she did not expect):

> Naturally, I no longer drove the school bus; two weeks after the accident, the school board mailed me a certified letter saying my services were no longer required, but I had already made that decision for myself, thank you. And since Eden Schraft never called me, the way she usually did, about carrying mail in the summer months, I gave that up too; a bit more reluctantly, however, than I have up the bus, for I had no terrible associations with that particular job. (225)

As the sole provider for her family, Dolores finds employment driving for the motels in Lake Placid. That employment comes about, however, as a result of Dolores's own self-imposed exile from the town after the accident, when she began shopping in Lake Placid to avoid interacting with the people of Sam Dent. There, she begins to establish a

connection with a new community by reading the Lake Placid news papers, where she finds new employment driving for the hotels.

Despite this separation for her community, the town of Sam Dent, which comes about through mutual avoidance, Dolores interprets this distance as an integral part of the mourning process – both her own and that of the people of her town (collectively and individually). Having needed a certain amount of time to herself in order to heal from traumatic crisis, she assumes that others are going through this process as well, requiring their own time before they can overcome the intensity of their loss and accept her as one of their own again. Once the pain of the tragedy has diminished, however, she anticipates that she will be reintegrated into the community. Her attendance at the county fair is calculated to serve as that moment:

> […] I figured that enough time had passed for people to have gone through their first tangled reactions to the accident and come out on the other side, just as I more or less had myself; I had pretty well stayed out of sight and, I hoped, mind, all these lonesome months, which was only proper; by now, I thought, people would have put their dark conflicted feelings about me behind them and would once again be free to act towards me and Abbott like the dear old friends and neighbors they had always been. Sam Dent was our permanent lifelong community. We belonged to this town, we always had, and they to us; nothing could change that, I thought. It was like a true family. (222-223)

Dolores and Abbott have always attended the fair, where Dolores prefers the quiet of the animal pavilions, but where Abbott prefers to be in the thick of things, in particular at the demolition derby, which he likes to view from the top of the grandstand. Being confined to a wheelchair by his stroke, Abbott and Dolores must rely on the assistance of their fellow townspeople to help Dolores carry Abbott, in his wheelchair, up the grandstand steps:

> It's not the same for Abbott. He's more at ease in the flash and bustle and noise of the midway and, as I said, the demolition derby, which he prefers to watch from high in the grandstand. 'You… need… perspective… to… experience… it,' he explains. That's a problem, of course, with his being confined to a wheel chair in recent years. Normally, what happens is that a couple of men from town spot us before we even get to the grandstand and meet us at the bottom of the steps and, one on each side, latch on and carry Abbott in his wheelchair to the top level, where he can set his brake and watch the whole thing to his heart's delight, to the very end. Afterwards, usually the same fellows from town show up and carry him back to the parking lot. (222)

This necessity makes Dolores's attendance at the fair more than just a first appearance at a community event. It is also a test of the community's willingness to actively reintegrate Dolores and Abbott among themselves.

As Dolores and Abbott enter the fairgrounds, no one returns Dolores's greetings, although as she herself remarks: "I'm pretty easy to recognize, even in twilight dark: I'm big and have red hair, and here I am pushing this small man in a wheelchair" (231). Almost all of the town is there in the grandstand, however they treat Dolores and Abbott as though they were not there, not even discriminating between Dolores, whom they blame for the accident, and Abbott, who has had nothing to do with it:

> […] most of the town of Sam Dent comes out for the demolition derby – and saw them glance at us and then look quickly back towards the track and stage in front or nudge the person next to them, who would then take his turn casting a quick expressionless glance at us. No one said a word to me and Abbott or even acknowledged our presence. I knew it was not Abbott they were snubbing; it was me. But he was with me, so they ignored him too. That made me mad. (231-232)

When no one comes to their immediate aid, Dolores is left to wrestle Abbott and his chair up the stairs alone. If help comes, Dolores observes, it will have to come from a stranger or tourist, someone outside the boundaries of the shared, social identity belonging to the traumatized community:

> I backed him around and drew the chair up backwards to the first step, thinking I'd try to lug him up one step at a time, thinking also that maybe someone kind would see me struggling and would come to my aid. It'd probably have to be a stranger. A tourist,

> even. I grunted and yanked, and the chair came along with a thump, and we were up one step. Then another. Then a third, until soon we had made the first landing. (232)

Finally help does arrive in the form of Billy Ansel, who helps Dolores carry Abbott up the stairs to the uppermost landing. Billy's appearance is frightening to Dolores, his behavior unusual, and she misinterprets his friendly overtures as a kind of mockery until she realizes that he is merely intoxicated. As was hinted in his own narrative, Billy takes refuge in the use of alcohol after the accident as he used to take refuge in Marijuana to help him deal with the trauma of Vietnam – both alcohol and marijuana providing a means to hold onto both the present and the past simultaneously (although in the case of alcohol, it does so in a painful way). Once a heroic figure, Billy has become slightly frightening, but to a much greater degree, simply sad:

> I didn't know what to think of how Billy had changed since the accident. He scared me; but mostly he made me sad. He had been a noble man; and now he was ruined. The accident had ruined a lot of lives. Or, to be exact, it had busted apart the structures on which those lives had depended – depended, I guess, to a greater degree than we had originally believed. A town needs his children for a lot more than it thinks. (235-236)

Among all of the novel's primary characters, Billy has dealt with the tragedy in the least productive way, abandoning his loving, if illicit, relationship with Risa Walker and giving up on all that is positive in life in order to embrace the past. As Dolores observes,

he is a man who now loves no one. He is accompanied by his new "girlfriend," a slightly sleazy girl names Stacey Gale from outside of Sam Dent. Despite his self-isolation, it is not surprising that Billy should be the one to help Dolores, since among all of the people in Sam Dent, he is in the unique position of knowing the truth about the accident. He does not reject Dolores, because he recognizes the lie in Nichole's claim that Dolores had been speeding, although he also recognizes and values the necessity of that lie.

The sad ascent of Abbott in his wheel chair, flanked by Dolores, a drunken Billy Ansel, and his girlfriend Stacey, contrasts with earlier years in which Sam Dent's community had proudly carried Abbott to the top of the grandstand. Once at the center of the social structure, Dolores and Abbott are now relegated to the furthermost margins of the community. That center is now occupied by Nichole, who arrives in her wheelchair and is carried aloft by the crowd "like a saint in a religious procession":

> Everyone was smiling, and the folks nearest Nichole were reaching out as if to touch her. A few people had started to clap their hands, and more and more of them were picking it up, as Sam and his family, with Nichole in the lead, made their way from the gate straight to the bottom of the stairs at the far side of the grandstand. Nichole had a lovely sweet smile on her face – she's a beautiful girl anyhow, a fourteen-year-old blessed with movie star looks, practically – and she waved one hand back and forth slowly, like a saint in a religious procession or something, while the people applauded and backed out of the way of her wheelchair. (238)

In a triumphant procession, Nichole is carried to the top of the grandstand just opposite Abbott. There, in a physical sense as well, she occupies the position habitually afforded Dolores and Abbott in the past:

> Several men, three or four of them, gathered around her wheelchair and lifted it, like it was a throne, and with her father, Sam, and the rest of her family falling in behind, they carried Nichole up the stairs in a stately way, while the applause grew, a steady respectful clapping, […]. (239)

The reaction to Nichole is hyperbolic, to a large extent because like Dolores, this is Nichole's first appearance in the community since the accident, and the community is establishing both Nichole's and Dolores's future roles in social life. A clear-cut ethical interpretation has been imposed upon the accident, to a large extent as a result of Nichole's act of nomothesis. By making Dolores responsible for the accident, the ambiguity created by collective trauma is resolved including the degree of Dolores innocence and guilt (a relatively trivial matter in terms of collective, social identity). At a much more significant level, that resolution reduced the collective anxiety surrounding the accident by defining that accident within the ethical framework, establishing causality, culpability, and permitting the community to *expel* what they now perceive to have violated the normative bounds of collective identity – Dolores Driscoll. Here, the restoration of the symbolized field of meaning and its logical terms is more important to the community than the truth of the accident. The community makes Nichole's role as transcendent victim who defines the very boundary between life and death their rallying

point. By expelling Dolores and "beatifying" Nichole, the community is able to reestablish shared symbolized meaning by reestablishing the inside/outside of the community's collective "Self."

Although she does not know what Nichole has testified at her deposition, Dolores nonetheless recognizes the reciprocal nature of their relationship, interpreting it at a deep, psychological level. It is not coincidence that both of these individuals who are utilized by the community to restore shared, symbolized meaning (Dolores as "perpetrator" and Nichole as "victim") themselves occupy an uncomfortable space between symbolized entities. Dolores's identity straddles the opposition between *innocent* and *guilty,* while Nichole's identity straddles the distinction between *victim* and *survivor* (i.e. lucky and unlucky). Dolores is expelled because she blurs the distinctions necessary for an ethical evaluation of this tragedy, while Nichole is made the community's touchstone because she destroys the categories if *luck*, thereby restoring the primacy of causality.

> Part of it, I knew, was that Nichole Burnell had survived the accident and had suffered a terrible loss, loss made visible by the wheelchair, and now for the first time, after many months away from us, she was at last returning to us, returning in a kind of triumph. Part of it was that she was a beautiful young girl purified by her injury. I remember how I used to regard some of the Vietnam vets who worked for Billy Ansel. And part of it, I also knew, was me, Dolores Driscoll, the fact of my presence here tonight and the way people felt compelled to treat me. If they could

> not forgive me, they could at least celebrate Nichole, and then maybe they would not feel so bad that I, too, was one of them. (239)

It is Billy who provides another, more superficial explanation for the crowd's reaction to Nichole, as his new girlfriend wonders aloud what all the fuss over Nichole can be about: "'That kid has saved this town from a hundred lawsuits. She kept us all out of court, when it looked like half the damned town wanted nothing else but to *go* to court'" (239). This explanation is more comprehensible to an outsider like Stacy, and it also addresses the surface manifestation of a town of individuals separated by traumatic experience, each demanding with their lawsuits their own ethical explanation they might share with others. Nichole's testimony serves the good of the community, and in that sense, it also serves the interests of Dolores and Abbott. Billy's revelation that Nichole has provided a resolving testimony takes them fully unaware however, as no one has revealed Nichole's testimony to them. Until this point, Dolores had not heard that she has ultimately been blamed for the accident and that the ambiguous (e.g. sublime) apprehension of her identity as *both* innocent and guilty has been resolved to merely guilty, thereby permitting shared, social meaning to be restored. It is only after much evasion that Billy finally reveals the story of Nichole's deposition to them:

> "[…] Their lawyer, this guy Mitchell Stephens, he couldn't get Nichole to testify the way he wanted her to, that's all. And then I guess he didn't feel he had a strong negligence case anymore, so he went home, Since then, other folks have heard about it, and

> they've started having second thoughts themselves, and their lawyers, too, have started dropping out, one by one. So now it looks like we won't be seeing any lawsuits, after all. Which is fast bringing this town back together," he said. "The girl has done us all, every single person in town, a valuable service. Even you, Abbott. Even you, Dolores, believe it or not." (244)

The situation is awkward for Billy, who knows that Nichole has lied, and it is difficult for him to explain the significance of that false testimony. Even more difficult is explaining his part in the lie, since he had been driving behind the bus when it left the road and could have countered Nichole's falsified testimony. The lie in which both Billy and Nichole play a role, whether actively fabricating facts, or passively suppressing the truth, restores the integrity of the discursive community. It was a necessary lie in that it was the lesser of all available evils, however Dolores will have to pay the price of that manipulated narrative. Ironically, although Nichole is celebrated as the community's perfect victim, what she has suffered threatened to destroy the community. Dolores, the chosen "perpetrator" is actually the one who is sacrificed for the good of the community, being expelled or socially "killed" so that the community may survive. As the bearer of this bad news, Billy tries to distance himself from any responsibility, arguing that he could only have said what speed the bus was going based on the speed he usually drove. Nichole's assertion that the bus had been going seventy-two miles an hour the time of the crash was "irrefutable" given that she claimed to have been looking at the speedometer:

> "What Nichole said she witnessed," he said, "was the accident. She was sitting in the bus up front next to you, Dolores. I guess I was the only other witness, but I was driving a ways behind you, and not paying much attention, either. So what Nichole had to say counted a whole lot. […] All I knew was the speed that I myself *usually* drive up there. Fifty-five to sixty, is what I told them. Nichole, though, she was very certain. She said she remembered it clearly – she knew how fast you were going when the bus went off the road. That's what she told them." (245)

Billy's defense that he could only estimate his speed based on his habitual behavior is likely true, despite the fact that he knows that Nichole is lying. Dolores herself did the same, testifying that she had been within the speed limit, while later admitting to Mitchell Stephens that she herself only knew the speed at which she usually drove that stretch of road. Billy's revelation finally puts to rest the uncertainty of Dolores's role in the community. At long last she has been let in on the narrative that the community now holds to be the truth about the accident, and she realizes that there are two narratives – the truth as she knows it, and the narrative that holds the town together:

> Now, in addition to the truth, I knew what nearly everyone else in town knew and believed, and if they didn't, they were learning and coming to believe it this very minute, probably, from the person standing or sitting next to them here at the fair – they were learning that Dolores Driscoll, the driver of the school bus, was to blame for

> the terrible Sam Dent school bus accident last January. […]
>
> Dolores Driscoll was the reason why the bus had gone off the road and tumbled down the embankment and into the icy water-filled sandpit. Dolores Driscoll was the reason why the children of Sam Dent had died. (247)

The resolution of individual trauma is incompatible with the resolution of collective trauma, and the resolution that serves the consensus silences Dolores in her personal account of traumatic experience – just as it silences the personal (heterogeneous) accounts of everyone else who experienced the tragedy. Dolores's reaction is not one of anger, however, nor does she show a desire to set the record straight. Rather, she is merely relieved that the suspense of waiting for judgment is ended and her identity once again resolved:

> You'd expect me to feel angry, maybe, unjustly accused and all that. But I didn't. Not at all. I felt relieved. And, therefore, grateful. Grateful to Billy Ansel, for revealing what Nichole had done, and grateful to Nichole for having done it. (248)

It is extremely unlikely that a single individual could sway the consensus about a matter which the majority has not experienced firsthand, and Dolores realizes that this consensus has formed around a necessary lie. The news that the town now accepts her guilt completes Dolores's separation from her community, and what becomes important to her is the recognition by Billy as to what the truth was. Her apprehension of "reality" as she

experienced it is validated by Billy, the only other adult to witness the accident, and in that private recognition, these two individuals form their own discursive community:

> "[…] I just figured you knew, like everybody else. I'm sorry, Dolores" he said.
>
> "No, don't be sorry to me, Billy. Not as long as you know the *truth*."
>
> "Well, yeah, I know the truth."
>
> "That's two of us, then," I said. There were three of us, of course, counting Nichole. Well, four, actually, counting Abbott. But Abbott knew the truth because he happened to believe me, and I only assumed that. […] Abbott wasn't with me then; I was alone. (246-247)

Just as Nichole dealt with her traumatic crisis by recognizing the existence of separate realities, Dolores realizes that she shares her truth with just two other people; Nichole and Billy, who were both at the scene of the accident, and who therefore shared her experience of the events as they unfolded on that day. The change that she has undergone through the integration of heterogeneous experience destroys the bonds of shared meaning that existed before the accident; even that which she shared with Abbott, who now may or may not believe the truth that Dolores is innocent, but who can never *know* it. The bond that she shared with Abbott, which was based on their common life together and that allowed her to "know" what he was saying, even when his words were seemingly incomprehensible, is severed. In the wake of Billy's revelation, she became

aware of this loss of connection, noting that for the first time in her life she neither knows, nor cares what Abbott is thinking or feeling. The accident has enabled Dolores both to understand and to accept the essential isolation of each individual in her perceptions, emotions, and apprehension of meaning and that realization frees her to construct her own identity and her own reality. She is finally able to claim the self-contained self-sufficiency she desired and that was always a part of her subjectivity, smuggled out and surreptitiously projected onto Abbott:

> And for once, possibly for the first time in our life together, I did not know what Abbott was thinking or feeling. Even more peculiar, I didn't care, either. He might be angry, he might be resentful, he might even think I had lied to him. I didn't care; it didn't matter what Abbott thought. I felt myself singled out in a way that had not happened to me before, and although I have never experienced such solitude as that, I have also never felt quite so strong. (248)

In the demolition derby that follows Billy's revelation, the novel offers a last metaphor for the resolution of individual trauma and collective trauma, underscoring the essential difference between those crises. The individual is driven to integrate unmediated somatosensory experience in the field of symbolized meaning, expanding the range of what can be said in order to resolve the division of subjectivity that heterogeneous experience creates. The discursive community is driven to find a *concensus* that may or may not accord with individual experience, and demands not a "true" narrative in this

sense, but instead a *believable* narrative. Given that each individual is also a social being, this socially constructed narrative does indeed address a part of the individual crisis – an ethical crisis.

Unlike the trauma depicted in *Traumnovelle,* in the case of a traumatic experience that affects a broad range of individuals such as the bus accident, each individual forms their own "truth" about their traumatic experience, with each creating a separate and distinct "reality" in Idiolect. Those individual realities separate the members of the discursive community from one another. The narrative that articulates collective traumatic crisis in the Communicative domain unifies those individuals again, although often at the cost of some portion of the individual's own apprehension of reality. While each individual will form his or her own apprehension of shared signification in the Communicative domain and the trauma narrative articulated there, that narrative constrains individual discourse, thereby ensuring that communication will continue in the perception that reality is approximately shared.

The demolition derby becomes *the* metaphor for the negotiation of meaning. Dolores's old station wagon, which had once served as her first "school bus" so many years ago, has been entered in the derby by one of Billy Ansel's mechanics, Jimbo Gagne. Usually the cars that are modified for the derby are unrecognizable, and Dolores anticipates that it will be difficult even for her, to recognize "Boomer," as she and the children once named the car:

> […] I kept peering around in search of my old station wagon,
> Boomer, which I had good reason to hope would be entered in the

> derby tonight, resurrected and driven by Jimbo Gagne. It would have been difficult to recognize it – they take out all the windows glass and lights, and you can barely tell what brand or model car it was originally, except by the shape of its fenders and grille and so on. Forget telling who owned the car originally. (228)

In fact, "Boomer" is very easy to spot, as Jimbo has painted the name across the top of the station wagon. Dolores and everyone in the grandstand will be able to easily recognize her car, which in a sense, already isolates the car (and through it, her) as the center of focus among a field of anonymous cars:

> Suddenly, Abbott raised his left arm, his good one, and pointed. I followed his finger down to the arena and saw what he saw, old Boomer, my Dodge station wagon, number 57, it was. Jimbo Gagne had painted the car black and had written the number and his first name and a peace symbol across the hood in big yellow letters. Along the side was the name of the sponsor, not-quite-free advertising for Billy Ansel's Sunoco station. And on the top of the wagon, in huge letters, he had painted the word BOOMER. (249)

The ensuing battle galvanizes the crowd – the community of Sam Dent – and not surprisingly, the other cars "gang up" on Boomer. In a none-too-subtle gesture, the other drivers act out their rage, "punishing" Dolores by proxy as they attempt to destroy the car that marked her beginnings as the town's school bus driver. Heart pounding, Dolores

rises with the rest of the crowd to witness the spectacle of the town's rage, made corporeal in the arena:

> My heart was pounding furiously. I was standing now, everyone was standing, and if he hadn't been positioned at the top of the stairs, Abbott wouldn't have been able to see. I hoped that Nichole, at the other side of the grandstand, could see this. Everyone wanted to see Boomer get hit, and again and again they got their wish, as Jimbo seemed unable to get free of the pack long enough to do any of the hitting himself. The other drivers were ganging up on Boomer, going around one another, abandoning good clear shots at nearby cars for a glancing shot at Boomer. (250-251)

The entire community unites in a shared animosity towards Dolores and her car, and in the pleasure of smashing Boomer, certainly acting out their own inexpressible rage at the accident itself, as much as expressing their rage at Dolores:

> […] every time Boomer got hit, no matter who hit it, the crowd roared with sheer pleasure. (250)

The moment proves to be a moment of cathartic expression rather than a crude representation of total rejection, and eventually the crowd undergoes a change. Despite the number of assailants, Boomer proves to be resilient – just as Dolores herself has been resilient – and as cars slowly fall to the wayside, too damaged to continue, Boomer endures. Eventually, only Boomer and two other cars remain in the ring. Demonstrating both the capriciousness of collectively generated "reality" and the power of the consensus

in establishing "meaning" the crowd's attitude suddenly and collectively changes. While the derby began as a brutal, straight-forward celebration of Boomer's isolation and destruction, at once the car's ability to endure thrusts it into the role of the tenacious underdog. The crowd now rallies behind Boomer, which now no longer represents what the community feels has threatened it, and instead, the car comes to represent the community's own threatened self:

> The crowd erupted joyously, filling the night air with wild shouts and cries, and when Jimbo had Boomer lined up on the Eagle, with the rear bumper headed straight towards the right front end of the other car, the people hollered for him to do it! Do it! *Do it!* And when he smashed into the fender and wheel and tore the steering rods of the Eagle, stopping it dead where it stood, […] the crowd jumped up and down and yelled with delighted approval and slapped each other on the shoulders and backs. (252)

"Truth" in shared signification is utilitarian, pragmatically determined as that which will preserve the unity and cohesion of that community. Within the social context, the purpose of each individual's participation in the "game" of negotiating meaning is not to win, but instead, to ensure the continuation of the game. With its rage spent in the expression, and with the social affirmation of the "cause" of the accident (e.g. Dolores), the community turns to the symbolic expression of tenacity and a will to survive that Dolores also offers Sam Dent. The community is once again unified in an expression of mutual support. This "rehabilitation" of Boomer's role in the derby as a metaphor for

Dolores's rehabilitation" and reacceptance in the community (a sort of symbolic "resurrection" after a symbolic "sacrifice") does not affect Dolores personally however. Her own separation from the community she had once regarded as her "family" is already complete, and the negotiation of shared meaning taking place below her is meaningless to her. The town is not her discursive community anymore:

> To tell the truth, up there in the stands, after Billy had revealed to me what everyone in the town now regarded as the truth, in the passage of but a few moments' time I had come to feel utterly and permanently separated from the town of Sam Dent and all its people. There was no reason for me to want to stand up and cheer first to see a car once owned and driven by Dolores Driscoll get destroyed by a bunch of other cars and then join in when the very same people cheered to see it turn and destroy the others. This demolition derby was a thing that held meaning for other people, but not for me. (253-254)

Even as she realizes that she is no longer a member of the community, Dolores is also aware that her lack of involvement itself is shared by those individual citizens of Sam Dent who have had to come to terms with the *experience* of the trauma. While Sam Dent has found a resolution for collective trauma that speaks for the community at large (a solution that differs sharply from the solution sought by outsiders to address collective trauma of an even larger discursive community), that solution has no impact on the intimate circle of individuals who must manage the significant individual experience of

trauma. That smaller circle of individuals within the greater community of Sam Dent, are unified by a single thing: the fact that they each exist in their own, separate reality. No narrative constructed by the town to make sense of the accident, and no use of the survivors by the town in achieving that aim, can have any lasting meaning for the actual survivors themselves. These efforts to memorialize, to cast blame, and to expel what is perceived as heterogeneous serves the common good, not the individual good, and this, Dolores recognizes, is exactly as it should be:

> I do not believe that Nichole Burnell could have joined them, either; neither would any of the other children who had been riding on the bus with me that morning. All of us – Nichole, I, the children who survived the accident, and the children who did not – it was as if we were a town of solitaries living in a sweet hereafter, and no matter how the people of Sam Dent treated us, whether they memorialized us or despised us, whether they cheered our destruction or applauded our victory over adversity, they did it to meet their needs, not ours. Which, since it could be no other way, was exactly as it should be.
>
> Nichole Burnell, Bear Otto, the Lamston kids, Sean Walker, Jessica and Mason Ansel, the Atwater and the Bilodeau kids, all the children who had been on the bus and had died and had not died, and I, Dolores Driscoll – we were absolutely alone, each of us, and even our shared aloneness did not modify the simple fact of

> it. And even if we weren't dead, in an important way which no longer puzzled or frightened me and which I therefore no longer resisted, we were as good as dead. (254)

Dolores's ability to transcend her trauma, like Nichole's, comes not in the restoration of a single reality that can be perceived to be shared by everyone, but instead, it comes in the occult and sublime knowledge that reality and meaning are constructed, and that these essentially cannot ever be shared even among members of the same discursive community. Each individual holds her his or herself an Idiolectic apprehension of reality that is based on individual experience. Shared symbolized "meaning" in the Communicative domain is essentially nothing more than a social compact to behave as though meaning were shared, or even to believe it is so, in order that social and discursive interaction remain possible. With its collective response to the derby, the town of Sam Dent has once again achieved that consensus. As Dolores stands to take Abbott to the car, intending to leave the town forever, the community finally responds to her need, carrying Abbott "smoothly down the stairs." Sam Dent is once again able to accept Dolores, now that a shared symbolized field of meaning has been reformed and the community's unity restored:

> Without waiting for an answer, I stepped behind his wheelchair, released the brake, and tipped it towards me on its rear wheels, preparing to thump it down the stairs, one step at a time. It would be a bumpy ride for him, but I knew he could take it. He's not as fragile as he looks.

> But as I rolled him to the edge of the landing, a young fellow seated in the row in front of me stood up and, to my surprise, turned to help. I recognized him but did not know him personally. […]Another man suddenly appeared on my other side, an older man who looked like a summer person, grey-haired, trim, in sandals and Bermuda shorts and blue dress shirt. Then a third and a fourth man moved into place, and before I could say a word, they had lifted Abbott's chair and were carrying him smoothly down the stairs. (254-255)

As she leaves the grandstand, her progress is followed attentively by the crowd, and yet she notes how easily that crowd that had once been her community is able to turn its attention back to the fourth heat of the derby. Life goes on, Dolores concludes. The process of constructing meaning and identity, both individual and collective, is an ongoing process and once separated, Dolores's path and the path of Sam Dent move resolutely apart:

> I followed along behind. The crowd had gone silent now, and it seemed that everyone had decided to watch us descended the stairs. I held my head up and tried to look like I didn't notice. When I reached the ground, I said thanks to the four men, and took over Abbott's wheelchair, and pushed him quickly through the gate. As I myself exited the grandstand, I glanced back and saw that the fourth heat of the derby had begun, and the crowd had

> gotten itself attentive and noisy all over again. Even Billy Ansel.
> Life goes on, I might have said, if there had been anyone to hear
> me. Nichole Burnell I could not see from there. (255)

Over the course of *The Sweet Hereafter*, the reader is led through the progression from individual crises, to the negotiation of shared meaning and collective crisis, and from that negotiation to the resolution of all crises in a compromise between individual perceptions of "reality," and the compact that meaning is shared. The need both to signify unmediated, individual experience and to maintain the consensus of shared meaning that allows social interaction, pits opposing traumatic processes against one another. That conflict exists not only in the opposition of the individual and the social entity, but within the individual, who is both experiencing being and social being. Ultimately, for all of the complexities encountered when heterogeneous experience demands the reanalysis of the organizational domains, it is these opposing agendas of symbolized meaning – to express all experience, and to preserve the social bond – that generates traumatic crisis, and makes it so resistant to resolution.

Conclusion

> […] I want to tell you this: twenty years ago I watched a man die on a trail near the village of My Khe. I did not kill him. But I was present, you see, and my presence was guilt enough. […] I remember feeling the burden of responsibility and grief. I blamed myself. And rightly so, because I was present. […] I want you to feel what I felt. I want you to know why story-truth is truer sometimes than happening-truth. (Tim O'Brien)[1]

The theoretical model developed in this study is first and foremost a cognitive model that is designed to account for the ongoing, dynamic process by which we apprehend ourselves and the world around us. That model, which I have based on existent notions of dynamic systems, can perhaps best be termed a *confluent, dynamic model of cognition and subjectivity*. I have consciously developed this model to span the boundaries that exist between theories of subjectivity, semiosis, cognition and social interaction, since it is my contention that, aside from any convenience that can be derived from separating these theoretical areas, they belong to a single process by which meaning and identity are generated.

In developing this model, I have purposely availed myself of the kinds of terms and dynamic processes used to describe the neuro-physiological functioning of the brain. Although we may be many years away from uniting our understanding of the physiological functioning of the brain with our understanding of psychological, semiotic, or philosophical theory, it is clear that we will eventually need to do so. Existent cognitive theory already accounts for some aspects of psychological functioning including strong emotion as overflow (into the limbic system), the lateralized separation

[1] Tim O'Brien, *The Things They Carried* (New York: Broadway Books, 1998) 179.

of spatial from sequential cognitive ordering, and even differences in cognitive style and semiotic activity that are linked to innate differences in lateralization and cerebral dominance.[2] It will have to remain for someone else more versed in neurophysiology to establish the somatic basis for consciousness and subjectivity however a model of cognition that is itself designed as a dynamic system of differentials, current, induction, impedance, and overflow will move us towards such a connection more quickly than psychologized models that define entities such as ego, superego and id, or that establish identity as a monolithic entity.

Although my purpose has been to develop a more adequate model for understanding cognition and subjectivity, trauma has taken center stage as the primary object of my investigations. I have argued that trauma provides us with a unique opportunity to expand our understanding of subjectivity and the relationship between the individual and society. Rather than representing a breakdown of meaning and identity, trauma allows us to observe aspects of cognitive functioning that otherwise remain beneath the threshold of human awareness. This examination of trauma serves to help redefine subjectivity and cognition, while at the same time, rethinking existent notions of subjectivity and meaning allows us to bring together seemingly oppositional theoretical stances that have fragmented trauma theory, unifying them within a single theoretical model. This assimilative view of trauma reveals the active dynamic of subjectivity and

[2] See Joseph E. LeDoux, "Emotion Circuits in the Brain," *Annual Review of Neuroscience* 23 (2000): 155-184. Sally Springer and Georg Deutsch, *Left Brain, Right Brain* (San Francisco: W.H. Freeman, 1981). George Lakoff, and Mark Johnson, *Philosophy in the Flesh: The Embodied Mind and Its Challenge to Western Thought* (New York: Basic Books, 1999). Thomas G. West, *In the Mind's Eye: Visual Thinkers, Gifted People with Dyslexia and Other Learning Difficulties, Computer Images, and the Ironies of Creativity*, updated ed. (Albany, N.Y: Prometheus Books, 1997).

the underlying differentials that drive this dynamic, and attempts to capture what is valuable in conflicted approaches to trauma, while at the same time acknowledging the inadequacy of each as a comprehensive model.

I have used literary and filmic narratives to illustrate the way in which traumatic experience fragments meaning and identity, thereby revealing the vulnerability of our assumptions about any objective, external reality. Trauma, which must be defined by the individual's own experience of fragmentation rather than by any innate quality of any particular event or experience, presents the traumatized individual with conflicted objectives. The individual must modify symbolized meaning in order to express heterogeneous experience, while at the same time safeguarding that meaning as the medium of mutually comprehensible, social communication. Thus we might say that the traumatized individual suffers from *polylexia,* both in the inadequacy of the existent field of symbolized meaning to express the totality of the experience, and in the demand that the individual balance the personal expression of experience with constraints upon that expression imposed by the social domain. This need to create an expression of traumatic experience that reflects this polylexia gives rise, in turn, to a unique narrative genre – the *trauma narrative* – that is focused on expressing ambiguity, and on essentially recreating the traumatic schism in the reader/viewer as a way of bringing that person into a newly constituted, and now shared, apprehension of reality.

I call this a narrative genre, however, what I develop here is not a literary tool, nor is trauma narrative restricted to literary representations. That being said, I have consciously chosen to examine literary and filmic narratives for several reasons. As I

have already stated, I wanted to avoid imposing my own interpretation of traumatic experience on the individual's testimony of his or her own experience. This is a difficulty for which this model can provide no solution – and indeed, it is a difficulty that reflects an essential element in this model – the separation of individual cognition from the consensus of shared meaning. It is simply not possible for anyone to speak of another's traumatic experience without interjecting his or her own interpretation and experience. (Indeed, it is not even possible to truly *apprehend* what is experienced by another being.)

What we *are* able to do is to participate in the social renegotiation of meaning that trauma demands in order to reestablish the *appearance* and the *concensus* that meaning is shared, and that it binds us to one another as members of a common discursive community. Further, although polylexia can, and does emerge in first-person testimony, the artifice inherent in the production of literary and performance narratives (i.e., film and drama) is perhaps better suited to the objective of *sharing* the conflict of polylexia, since these modes of expression are mimetic, but also have greater access to means of aesthetic distortion. In this way, although a literary or performance narrative is not a spontaneous, first-person testimony, it is nevertheless well suited to the viral project by which polylexia may be recreated in the reader/viewer – thereby recreating the "silence" of trauma.

Trauma narrative, as a genre defined in this study, is characterized by the narrative's own innate structure – that is, by its ability to create multiple narrative "realities" that can neither be merged, nor separated from one another (covalent signification). The superfluity of symbolized meaning in the trauma narrative, as well as

the reader/viewer's inability to resolve that superfluity within existent meaning schemes, represents the narrative mechanism by which the silence of trauma is recreated. Defining trauma narrative in terms of its innate structure establishes a narrative genre that is not constrained by subject matter or narrative perspective (i.e., it need not represent a first-person account of a so-called traumatic or catastrophic event). Neither is such narrative limited by language, culture, or time period. Indeed, this definition of trauma narrative specifically excludes some narratives that, in current trauma theory might otherwise be treated as trauma narrative.

In selecting narratives to examine in this study, I looked for those that would best represent the broadest possible range of theoretical features being described, and that were likely to be familiar to the reader. Constrained by space in the number of narratives I could examine, I had to weigh the relative advantage of presenting a small number of very detailed analysis against the advantage of presenting a wide range of more superficial readings. Ultimately, I chose the former option in order to avoid having to reorient the reader to the narrative in question, while at the same time forcing that reader to complete the analyses that I had only cursorily carried out. Although I believe that a lesser number of in-depth analyses is the better choice, this narrow selection of narratives does not convey the capacity of the genre definition to transcend linguistic, cultural, and temporal barriers, nor does it allow me to show the full range of ways in which covalent signification can be created. (These are tasks that I will take up at a later time in another research project.)

An awareness of covalency in a narrative provides the reader or viewer with a means of identifying the polylexic experience of trauma, and the silence that such polylexia engenders. Ultimately, it is my hope that the model of subjectivity and cognition, together with the reinterpretation of trauma and trauma narrative that I present here will lead to an understanding of the origin of that polylexia – the inherent difficulty in negotiating meaning both at a personal level, and at the level of social interaction and the loss that such negotiation creates. Most importantly, we need to recognize and acknowledge that, in the negotiation of meaning surrounding traumatic experience, there are multiple traumatic processes at work. Each individual who participates in that discourse contributes his or her own apprehension of a given experience, and each individual is driven both to expand what can be said, and to limit what is acknowledged as "shared." We will eventually need to move away from therapeutic methods that force the individual to "reform" his or her narrative of traumatic experience so that it fits with the existent social apprehension of meaning (i.e., that which the individual shares with his or her therapist), and towards methods that allow the individual to recognize the limitations of symbolized meaning and the need to behave as though meaning is shared, while at the same time allowing her to acknowledge the validity of experience that exceeds the boundaries of those norms.

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